DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 035 625 TE 001 614

AUTHOR	Elliott, Virginia A., Ed.; Josephs, Lois S., Ed.
TITLE	English for the Academically Talented Student in the Secondary School. 1969 Revision of the Report of the Committee on English Programs for High School Students of Superior Ability of the National Council of Teachers of English.
INSTITUTION	National Council of Teachers of English, Champaign, Ill.; National Education Association, Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	69
NOTE	117p.
AVAILABLE FROM	NCTE, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Ill. 61820 (Stock No. 02801); NEA, Publications-Sales Section, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036 (HC $1.50)
EDRS PRICE	EDRS Price MF-$0.50 HC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS	Creative Thinking, Disadvantaged Youth, Educational Trends, *English Instruction, English Programs, High Achievers, *Secondary Education, Student Motivation, *Superior Students, *Talented Students, Talent Identification, Teacher Education, Teaching Methods, Underachievers

ABSTRACT

Introducing the essays in this publication, Virginia A. Elliott and Lois S. Josephs review the problems of teaching English to the academically talented student. Essays are by (1) Michael F. Shugrue, who surveys, from 1958 through 1968, the achievements of conferences, Curriculum Study Centers, and the Dartmouth Seminar; (2) John Simmons, who discusses the necessity and difficulties of identifying talented students in English; (3) Arno Jewett, who explores the problems of motivating bright underachievers; (4) Lois S. Josephs, who delineates the need for sensitive, perceptive teaching of gifted disadvantaged students; (5) Fred H. Stocking, who recommends ungraded, elective courses to stimulate bright students; (6) John A. Hart and Ann L. Hayes, who consider how a spirit of mutual inquiry, discussion, good student-teacher relationship, and creative writing can foster creative thought; (7) Virginia A. Elliott, who analyzes the training and characteristics necessary to teach talented students; and (8) Lois M. Gross, who reviews educational programs in the sixties for academically superior students. A selected bibliography is included. (JM)

ED035625

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ENGLISH

for the Academically Talented Student in the Secondary School

1969 Revision of the
Report of the Committee on English Programs for High School
Students of Superior Ability of
The National Council of Teachers
of English.

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Library of Congress Catalog Card No. 73-100402

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Copies may be ordered from the National Education Association, Publications-Sales Section, 1201 Sixteenth Street, N.W., Washington, D.C. 20036, or the National Council of Teachers of English, 508 South Sixth Street, Champaign, Illinois 61820. Single copy, $1.50. (Discounts on quantity orders, available only from NEA: 2-9 copies, 10 percent; 10 or more copies, 20 percent.) Carrying charges will be made on all orders not accompanied by funds in payment.

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CHAPTER I

An Overview: English for the Academically Talented

VIRGINIA A. ELLIOTT and LOIS S. JOSEPHS

THE MOST IMPORTANT aim of education, Jacqueline Grennan, president of Webster College, recently said, is to create decision makers,[1] decision makers, we might add, whose humane, farseeing decisions will lead to a continually improving world. John Gardner, former Secretary of the U.S. Department of Health, Education, and Welfare, agrees with Miss Grennan. "Leaders, even in a democracy, must lead. If our citizens are to recapture the sense of mission which survival demands, then our leaders at every level must have the capacity and the vision to call it out."[2] To educate future decision makers and start them on their search for truth, what study could be better than the humanities? And what subject lies at the center of humanistic study but English, with its basis in language, man's most distinguishing achievement, and its chief activities communication and the critical analysis of life as reflected in literature? Since decision makers are likely to be those students who in their high school years demonstrate academic talent, their high school English experience would seem crucial in their training and crucial, therefore, to the nation's hopes for the future.

In the opening chapter of the 1960 edition of *English for the Academically Talented Student*, Arno Jewett emphasized the vital place of the English classroom in the shaping of things to come.

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[1] Grennan, Jacqueline. Address given at Carnegie-Mellon University, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, April 20, 1968.

[2] Gardner, John W. *Excellence: Can We Be Equal and Excellent Too?* New York: Harper & Brothers, 1961. p. 125.

> Teachers of English are concerned with the processes of thought and the art of communication and understanding through verbal symbols—of helping man to understand himself and his fellow man. This is an age when inadequate or faulty communication and a lack of wisdom among citizens and nations can lead to disaster. In a world split by ideological conflict, in a nation bursting with an affluence of material goods, and in communities beset by a plethora of mass persuaders, there is need for intelligent persons who can use language to relieve tensions, to elevate cultural appreciation, and to convey truth.[3]

He also stressed literature as important to pupils who may "later be in positions of influence where they will need a deep as well as a broad understanding of human behavior. . . . The secrets of human experience," he says, "the wisdom of humanity, and the sparks of idealism are present in great books." He suggests further that by providing insights into "man's motives, aspirations, frustrations, conflicts, failures, successes, joys, and sorrows," the English classroom can foster those qualities essential to leadership: the ability to ask the right questions and the insight to make appropriate decisions.[4]

The state of American society today is even more critical than it was 10 years ago. Its divisiveness, evident in the difficulties of desegregation, conflicts between law and justice, polarized views on war, and unrest on campus, has immeasurably increased the need for committed leaders trained in the universal concerns of the humanities and with it the significance of the English class in the education of the talented. How relevant for the future leader, for instance, is the conflict between law and justice in *Billy Budd* at a time when riot-torn cities are faced with decisions between leniency and strict enforcement of the law.

With the need so evident, it seems time for a new look at the problems of teaching English to the academically talented student. In the 10 years since the first edition of this booklet, the problems have not decreased; rather they have multiplied in complexity. Controversial issues continue to arise and theories and procedures to provoke questions. Even in 1959, Jacques Barzun saw confusion in the opposing approaches of Europe and America to the education of the academically talented and in the incipient reversal between the two. He noted Europe as moving toward mass schooling "sixty years after the United States" at the same time that we were moving toward the former European emphasis on stratified schooling.[5] Ten years later, partly as a result of the recommendations of the Dartmouth Seminar, homogeneous grouping for advanced students, now a common practice in American schools, is again controversial. Herbert J. Muller, in his summation of the controversy at the conference, clearly indicates the unresolved nature of the issue:

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[3] Jewett, Arno. "English for the Academically Talented." *English for the Academically Talented Student in the Secondary School.* (Edited by Arno Jewett.) Published in cooperation with National Council of Teachers of English. Washington, D.C.: Project on the Academically Talented Student, National Education Association, 1960. p. 8.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 11.

> Those who doubted that all grouping should be done away with were thinking of the superior students, gifted individuals whose development might be hindered. Behind their differences lay the agreement that the issue of grouping was especially important in the teaching of English, not merely because this went on in every school grade, but because its humane aims included more than impersonal knowledge or practical skills; mastery of language and appreciation of literature contribute more directly to the development of personality than do other major subjects in the curriculum. And behind all discussion lay the issue of the actual and the ideal relation of the individual to society in modern democracy.[6]

Other questions have also arisen in the last 10 years. The merely academic emphasis for the gifted in English is again suspect as the trend moves from the traditionally structured curriculum toward more flexible programs which draw into the English classroom the greater scope of the humanities. Once programs for the gifted emphasized more work of a more demanding nature: literature of greater difficulty, the in-depth textual approach, and logical thinking. This emphasis has had some excellent results. Colleges generally have had to restructure freshman English courses to accommodate the improved preparation of entering freshmen. Today, without rejecting these austerities, English classes for the able tend to broaden the spectrum of their offerings in order to add new dimensions: opportunity for creativity, freer and broader reading, the encouragement of student interest in the arts, consideration of the problems of modern society. Now comes the problem of whether it is possible to maintain the unquestioned academic success of the courses of the past 10 years and at the same time add to their offerings.

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[5] Barzun, Jacques. *The House of Intellect.* New York: Harper Torchbooks, 1961. p. 89.

[6] Muller, Herbert J. *The Uses of English.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967. p. 34.

The question of how much consideration creativity should receive in the identification and teaching of the academically talented in English is only beginning to be discussed. Unresolved, too, are the questions of what methods are most successful with the academically talented, what special preservice and in-service training teachers of the academically talented should have, how newly developed curricular materials and programs can best serve the academically talented, what techniques and materials can best be used with underachievers and gifted disadvantaged students, and, finally, what research is needed.

This booklet does not aim to provide absolute answers to these questions—the 10 years since the first edition have provided no absolute answers—but to present them for reconsideration in the light of the current dilemma and to supplement the basic statements of the earlier edition with the most recent thinking. Each essay reflects the individual point of view of its author, who has been involved in one way or another—in the schools or through colleges or professional organizations—with the academically talented student. The authors' interpretations and reassessments of the current scene recognize the pressures of the search for talent; and their suggestions for the intellectual training of the country's future decision makers show concern that every able youth, through the experiences of the English classroom, achieve all that he is capable of and in so doing develop "a commitment to the highest values of the society." [7]

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[7] Gardner, John W., *op. cit.*, p. 120.

CHAPTER II

A Decade of Change

MICHAEL F. SHUGRUE

THE ACADEMICALLY talented student has fared well over the past decade. In 1960 Arno Jewett noted a "growing interest in identifying and educating the academically talented," [1] an interest which arose not from the impact of Sputnik I in 1957, as Frank G. Jennings has demonstrated, [2] but from curriculum reforms which had begun earlier in the 1950's. By 1966 the Curriculum Commission of NCTE was able to report in *Ends and Issues* that attention was being "showered upon the needs of academically talented students." [3] I shall review some of the major research reports and other studies which have led to wide interest in the education in English of the able child, suggest certain limitations in the research efforts of the 1960's, and indicate the kinds of research which will most profit the academically talented student in the next decade.

As early as 1955, George Winchester Stone, who became executive secretary of the Modern Language Association in 1956, J. N. Hook, then executive secretary of the National Council of Teachers of English, and others were sufficiently troubled by the state of English instruction in the schools to initiate discussions on a national level. In January 1958, only three months after Sputnik I, the first of four fundamentally important conferences on the basic issues in the teaching of English took place in New York City. With support from the Ford Foundation, 28 scholars and teachers came together because, as they later reported,

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[1] Jewett, Arno. "English for the Academically Talented." *English for the Academically Talented Student in the Secondary School.* (Edited by Arno Jewett.) Published in cooperation with National Council of Teachers of English. Washington, D.C.: Project on the Academically Talented Student, National Education Association, 1960. p. 7.

[2] Jennings, Frank G. "The Revolution in Education: It Didn't Start with Sputnik." *Saturday Review* 50: 77; September 16, 1967.

[3] Frazier, Alexander, editor. *Ends and Issues.* Champaign, Ill.: Commission on the English Curriculum, National Council of Teachers of English, 1966. p. 38.

> Some of us in the profession believe that a thorough re-examination of the whole problem of the teaching of English, from the elementary grades through the graduate school, is now imperative. . . . Our only vested interest is the development of an increasingly higher degree of literacy in young American citizens. We think the matter is urgent; we hope that the profession will see these issues as basic and will expeditiously find solutions for the problems arising from them.[4]

In the four conferences the participants agreed upon 35 issues dealing with the curriculum, the preparation of English teachers for the schools and colleges, and the role of English in American society. Even before the 1960 publication of Jerome S. Bruner's influential *The Process of Education*,[5] they affirmed their belief in "an education in English which is sequential and cumulative in nature, practically and socially useful, and permanently rewarding to the mind and spirit of those who are fortunate enough to get it" and called for "financial support for several large articulated programs, with suitable means of testing and evaluating achievements at the various levels and facilities for disseminating the findings throughout the profession."[6] Although issue 9 asked how the "basic program in English" might be modified "for the less able student," acknowledged that "not all students are 'good' or 'superior,'" and considered the "individual differences of students," the *Basic Issues* report focused more clearly upon an English program for the academically talented student than upon a program for the average or disadvantaged—economically, culturally, socially, or linguistically. Even a casual examination of the English curriculum then prevalent in the American school, however, suggests why the report sought to define "the fundamental liberal discipline of English," to emphasize the development of a sequential content curriculum, and to call for massive support for curriculum reform in English. The special problems of educating the disadvantaged in English did not, in fact, receive the particular attention of the profession until such publications as *Improving English Skills of Culturally Different Youth in Large Cities* (1964) and NCTE's *Language Programs for the Disadvantaged* (1965).

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[4] National Council of Teachers of English. *The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English.* Champaign, Ill.: the Council, 1959. p. 6.

[5] Bruner, Jerome S. *The Process of Education.* Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1960.

[6] *Ibid.*, p. 15.

Even before the large-scale curriculum research recommended in the *Basic Issues* report began in 1962, the College Entrance Examination Board had established the Commission on English under the direction of Floyd Rinker. In the six years after 1959, the Commission on English made two noteworthy contributions to the improvement of English instruction, particularly the instruction of the academically talented youngster: the 1962 Summer Institute Program for teachers of English and the publication of *Freedom and Discipline in English* in 1965. The 20 institutes set up "to upgrade the teaching of English in the nation's secondary schools, especially the teaching of English to students intending to go to college" have made the greatest contribution to the reform of English teaching in the 1960's.[7] As John C. Gerber noted, "What makes these Institutes of especial significance . . . is that the program required twenty of the most influential Departments of English in the country to involve themselves *directly* in this advanced training of high-school teachers." [8] Moreover, the institute pattern worked out in 1962 served as the model for the majority of the 105 NDEA summer institutes in English in 1965, influenced proposals for succeeding summers, and provided a pattern for at least nine institutes for "Teachers and Supervisors of Advanced Placement or Honors English."

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[7] Gerber, John C. "The 1962 Summer Institutes of the Commission on English: Their Achievement and Promise." *PMLA* 78: 3-4; September 1963.

[8] *Ibid.*, p. 3.

Freedom and Discipline, on the other hand, took a cautiously narrow view of English when it proposed only "standards of achievement for college preparatory students."[9] The Commission admitted that its "concern with college preparatory courses in secondary schools may seem to have been narrow" but explained that "experience with students in the College Board Advanced Placement Program continues to reveal that better teaching of able students affects the whole school. The Commission's efforts, then, though aimed at one group, are intended to influence all tracks and levels."

In focusing so directly upon the academic needs of the able, college-bound student, *Freedom and Discipline* neglected the average and, more important, the disadvantaged student. The report defined the scope of the English program "as the study of language, literature, and composition, written and oral," and urged that "matters not clearly related to such study be excluded from it,"[10] without coming to grips with the social and educational forces which had already begun to affect the able as well as every other student.

In contrast, the Anglo-American Seminar on the Teaching of English held at Dartmouth College in the summer of 1966 raised fundamental questions about English for all students. After four weeks of discussion, the 50 participants agreed upon eleven points, including four of special importance to those interested in the education of the academically talented student:

1. Centrality of the pupil's exploring, extending, and shaping experiences in the English classroom
2. Significance of rich literary experiences in the educative process and the importance of teachers of English restudying particular selections to determine their appropriateness for reading at different levels
3. Need to overcome the restrictiveness of rigid patterns of "grouping" or "streaming" which limit the linguistic envi-

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[9] College Entrance Examination Board. *Freedom and Discipline in English.* Report of the Commission on English. New York: the Board, 1965. p. 1.

[10] *Ibid.*, p. 13.

ronment in which boys and girls learn English and which tend to inhibit language development

4. Need to negate the limiting, often stultifying, impact of examination patterns which direct attention of both teachers and pupils to aspects of English which are at best superficial and often misleading.

The Dartmouth conference has already induced many scholars and teachers to undertake a thoughtful reappraisal of the goals and methods of instruction in English. In *Drama: What Is Happening*, James Moffett argues that even able students must learn "about language, literature, and composition in a coherent way by participating in the experience of creating discourse: writing plays and short stories, poems, and other forms; or acting, interpreting, and creating drama in diverse and realistic situations." [11] James E. Miller, Jr., presents a view of English which "places language at the center of human existence and experience" and "the imaginative (creative or symbolizing) rather than the logical (signifying or communicating) faculty at the center of linguistic life and growth." If a new English has emerged for the academically talented student, Miller continues, "it is English that has placed literature, defined in the broadest terms, at the center of the curriculum, and that has taken the development of the imagination, conceived in the most liberating sense, as its ultimate aim." [12] Questions about testing and ability grouping in English, suspicions about the adequacy of the "content curriculum," and attempts to introduce such activities as "talk" and "dramatic improvisation" into the English classroom have directed the attention of the profession to a reexamination of even the most current curriculum guides, textbooks, and classroom techniques.

Late in 1961 curriculum research first known as Project English and later as the English Program of the

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[11] Moffett, James. *Drama: What Is Happening*. Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967. p. v.

[12] Miller, James E., Jr. "Literature in the Revitalized Curriculum." *Bulletin of the National Association of Secondary School Principals* 51: 29; April 1967.

USOE was initiated when Congress authorized funds for the improvement of English instruction through the Cooperative Research Branch of the U.S. Office of Education. Ralph C. M. Flynt, then Associate Commissioner for Educational Research and Development, described Project English as "our first venture in the area of programmed curriculum research and development." [13] By April 1962 the U.S. Office of Education had funded six Curriculum Study Centers in English: Carnegie-Mellon University, Hunter College of the City University of New York, the University of Minnesota, the University of Nebraska, Northwestern University, and the University of Oregon. By 1965, 24 Study and Demonstration Centers were under way. With few exceptions the Centers have developed materials especially suitable for the academically talented student.

By 1967 the original Centers had completed and begun to make available the curriculums which they had developed. The Center at Carnegie-Mellon, under the direction of Erwin Steinberg and Robert Slack, constructed a curriculum in language, literature, and composition frankly designed for the able, college-bound student in grades 10 to 12, later modifying it for the average student as well. Majorie Smiley's Gateway English Program at Hunter focused on an English program for the urban disadvantaged in the junior high school years, the only one of the first six Centers to concern itself specifically with a disadvantaged population. Stanley Kegler's Center at Minnesota produced 31 resource units on the nature and uses of the English language for students in grades 7 through 12. Wallace Douglas directed Northwestern's investigation into the process of composition. The Center at Oregon, directed by Albert Kitzhaber, used the Portland Study as a base for a balanced, sequential program in language, literature, and composition for seventh through twelfth grades.[14] At Nebraska, Paul Olson and Frank Rice undertook the most ambitious task of all, a sequential, spiral curriculum for students in kindergarten through grade 13, emphasizing composition and rhetoric but weaving in strands of literature and language. In every Center, college professors of English and schoolteachers worked together to design effective English programs for the schools.

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[13] Flynt, Ralph C. M. "The U.S. Office of Education Looks at Project English." *PMLA* 78: 30; September 1963.

Many of the curriculum units and guides developed by these original Centers and by those at Florida State, Gallaudet, Georgia, Indiana, Purdue, Northern Illinois, and Wisconsin, for example, have helped to establish a diversified "content curriculum" which will challenge the academically talented student in the next decade. Between 1965 and 1967, nearly fifteen thousand teachers attending NDEA summer institutes were introduced to 101 experimental units prepared by 18 of the Centers. In 1968 units from 18 Centers were available for classroom use and found wide acceptance in the schools. The Gateway English Program has already proved that aspects of it can interest and motivate the able, advantaged, suburban youngster as well as the urban, disadvantaged student for whom it was originally devised.

While some of the early critics of Project English came away from their examinations of experimental units "somewhat disappointed" because of a "lack of concern for the learner and how he learns" and of a "lack of definite plans for evaluation of the materials being produced,"[15] those who have had access to the full range of the new curriculums have found much to praise. Albert Kitzhaber has noted seven distinct achievements of the Curriculum Study Centers: a sharper definition of English as a school subject, a philosophical integrity for the English curriculum, defensible structures and sequences for English, the incorporation of current scholarship in learning theory and in the substantive fields of English, the close involvement of experienced schoolteachers in the writing of new curriculums, better communication between school and college teachers of English, and profound effects upon the writing of English textbooks.[16]

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[14] *See*, as background for the curriculum, Kitzhaber, Albert R., and others. *Education for College*. New York: The Ronald Press Co., 1961. The curriculum description is published as *A Curriculum in English, Grades 7-12*. Eugene: Oregon Curriculum Center, University of Oregon, 1959—.

[15] Carlsen, G. Robert, and Crow, James. "Project English Curriculum Centers." *English Journal* 56: 990, 992; October 1967.

With the exception of those few units designed for such special student populations as the deaf and the nonnative speaker, the Center materials have proved most successful in classrooms for the able or college-bound student. The transformational grammar which Oregon introduced as part of its language curriculum and Nebraska's literature units on fable and satire, to mention two examples, are genuinely challenging, subject-oriented approaches to English. As Mary Elizabeth Fowler observed in a review of Indiana University's *On Teaching Literature: Essays for Secondary School Teachers*, "The authors have made a serious attempt to confront the problems the high school teacher faces with the indifferent and poorly trained reader, yet one feels that the kinds of students who might respond to these approaches will largely be found in college preparatory classes." [17] The Nebraska curriculum, for example, asks the ninth-grade student who has been reading the *Odyssey* to compare selected passages from several translations and to write an essay pointing out variations in writing style. His analysis of such matters as metaphor, clarity, diction, rhythm, and sentence construction not only tests his close reading of the texts and his knowledge of poetic techniques but gives him an opportunity to display his command of a critical vocabulary and his ability to organize an argument. The directors of the Nebraska Center readily admit that this highly structured assignment is most suitable for the academically talented student. Centers like Carnegie-Mellon's not only have produced demanding literature units and a language curriculum based upon the best of modern linguistics but also have stressed an inductive approach in which the teacher "becomes neither preacher nor lecturer, but guide, discussion leader, arbiter, and perhaps, occasionally, resource person."

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[16] Kitzhaber, Albert. "The Government and English Teaching: A Retrospective View." *College Composition and Communication* 18: 139-41; October 1967.

[17] Fowler, Mary Elizabeth. *English Journal* 57: 262; February 1968.

The U.S. Office of Education has also supported more than two hundred individual basic and applied research projects in English since 1962. *Research in Written Composition*, an important example of the early work which affected curriculum planning for the able student, provided an authoritative survey of 504 studies in 1963, analyzed 5 in detail, and presented 24 areas for further research. Squire and Applebee's major *Study of English Programs in Selected High Schools Which Consistently Educate Outstanding Students in English* (1966), however, has probably contributed most significantly to our understanding of the secondary school English program, the teacher of English, and the education of the academically talented student. Three of the conclusions growing out of that analysis of the data gathered from 158 high schools in 45 states have special importance for this discussion. They report,

> The data reveal that in most schools the classrooms are teacher-dominated. Recitation—with its frequent emphasis on simple factual answers—and lectures and demonstrations with their emphases on "telling" students occupy more than 40 per cent of class time. Thus at least 40 per cent of class time in English seems devoted to approaches which stress passive and apparently deductive learning. Too seldom during such intervals in the classroom do many students seem concerned with the learning at hand.

They note, "Perhaps the most startling disclosure is the virtual rejection by English teachers of audio-visual aids." Further, they observe, "It is apparent that while different methods of grouping have been widely accepted in the better high schools in the country, the effect, if not the intent, has been to provide a special learning climate only for the above average to gifted student whose sights are on a college education. The non-college-bound student with special problems in ability, motivation, or divergent values is not receiving the same intensive attention." [18]

Although *Ends and Issues* noted that Advanced Placement work and the "shower" of attention being given to the able student threatened to crowd out "attention to the mass of students without academic aspirations," [19] it ignored an equally serious problem identified by the other study : even highly touted programs for the academically talented were less effective in many schools than they should have been.

Both *English Programs* and the reports of the Dartmouth Seminar challenge those practices in testing and ability grouping which have been thought to be of most value for the able pupil. David Goslin summarized the problems inherent in current, widespread testing and grouping procedures:

> To the extent that schools organize pupils according to their abilities, possibilities of social contact between children of differing levels of ability (as measured by standardized tests) are reduced. Research indicates that such differentiation within schools may have a negative effect on the performance levels of low-ability pupils. In addition, it is clear that ability grouping impedes the process of acculturation of members of culturally deprived groups, who tend to end up together in the low-ability groups.

His review of research in testing and grouping leads Goslin to recommend that educators "begin thinking about tests in much broader perspective, one that considers their social effects as well as one that merely considers their validity and reliability." [20]

While the pressures for college admission continue to grow and the excellent, academically oriented curriculums developed by Study Centers reach larger school populations, important questions about the education of the academically talented remain unanswered. Society can neither allow a disproportionate share of attention to be given to the able youngster nor deny him the right to the best possible education for which he is equipped. To answer the questions about the goals of instruction in English now being widely asked, the English profession, first of all, must study carefully the educational and social implications of testing and ability grouping. In his report on the Dartmouth meeting, John Dixon proposes the unstreamed or unsorted school because it is clearly necessary on "social and humanitarian grounds." Such a school is obviously not educationally possible "without a good deal of individual study, work in small groups, assignments and project work, as well as work for part of the time with the whole class." Unless these activities take place in the English classroom, Dixon warns, "no pupil will attain that individual growth in language which is basic to his progress in other subjects and his capacity to live fully and actively in society." [21] Dixon's proposal demonstrates the need for further research into the most effective ways of organizing student groups and student activities.

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[18] Squire, James R., and Applebee, Roger K. *A Study of English Programs in Selected High Schools Which Consistently Educate Outstanding Students in English.* Cooperative Research Project No. 1994. Urbana: University of Illinois, 1966. pp. 109, 346-47. For the importance of media in the English classroom, see Farrell, Edmund J. *English, Education, and the Electronic Revolution.* Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967. 77 pp.

[19] Frazier, Alexander, *op. cit.*, p. 39.

[20] Goslin, David A. "What's Wrong with Tests and Testing—Part II." *College Board Review* 66: 34, 36; Winter 1967-68. *See also* his *Search for Ability.* New York: Russell Sage Foundation, 1963. 204 pp.

New programs for the preparation of teachers of English must also be designed if teachers are to master a wide range of instructional techniques, materials, and methods. The *Guidelines* developed by the English Teacher Preparation Study can provide patterns for experimental programs in colleges and universities throughout the United States.[22]

Those who will write the curriculum for the 1970's must study both the fruits of the Curriculum Study Centers and the challenges to the "content curriculum" issued by the Dartmouth Seminar. If, in James Miller's words we have reintroduced in the 1960's the "idea of an elite—an intellectual elite—but have, perhaps, lost ground socially," our great effort in the future must be to find ways "to preserve our schools as microcosms of genuine democracy, but at the same time to educate for excellence." [23]

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[21] Dixon, John. *Growth Through English.* Reading, England: National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967. pp. 102-103. *See also* Muller, Herbert J. *The Uses of English.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967. pp. 24-33.

[22] Viall, William P., director. *English Teacher Preparation Study: Guidelines for the Preparation of Teachers of English.* Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1967. 11 pp. *See* the *English Journal* 57: 475-564; April 1968, for an exposition of the *Guidelines.*

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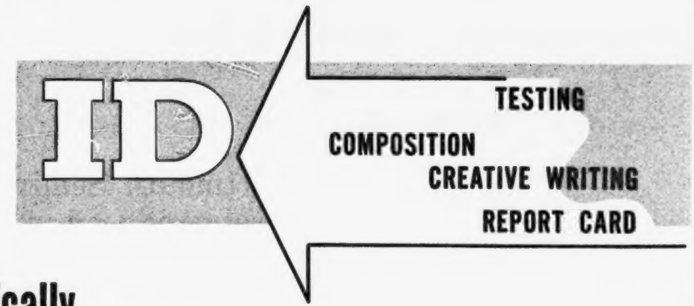
[23] Miller, James E., Jr., *op. cit.*, p. 37.



CHAPTER III

Identifying the Academically Talented Student in English

JOHN SIMMONS

THE PROPER identification of academically talented students in the language arts is vital to the success of even the most carefully designed and executed programs for them. Yet research, especially among English specialists, continues to focus primarily on curriculum development and teacher education with little truly scientific attention directed to the choice of students. Perhaps this neglect in search lies not so much in any indifference to the problem—unquestionably schools devote a great deal of time to choosing students for special classes in English—but rather in the uncertain and ambiguous situation that confronts the selection committee. What, in fact, *are* the characteristics of the academically talented student in English? This is the difficult question.

Essentially, four problems confuse the issues. A crying need exists for standardized tests appropriate to the measurement of ability in the humanities rather than to the measurement of analytical aptitudes for math and science, the focus of most existing standardized testing. Equally confusing is the indefinite nature of the English curriculum, which is hard to define in any one set of objectives; what exists as the basis of the discipline in one classroom may seem of little importance in another. In addition, teachers also differ because of the ambiguous nature of the discipline; the essence of what the English course means varies with the interests and eccentricities of the teacher, some of whom are ill-trained, inadequately prepared, or insensitive. Finally, there is the student. The academically talented student in English may have a variety of interests, talents, and abilities more difficult to pin down and identify than the more rational, more easily measured qualities which contribute to success in other disciplines.

With tests usually a first step in identification, it is important to realize that they sometimes provide inaccurate and irrelevant information. The IQ score, while still an undeniably significant measure, is, after all, only a general index. The score from most of the intelligence tests popular today does not indicate the variety of special aptitudes which characterize the talented student in English. New thinking about intelligence, however, is leading to new types of tests which may be more helpful, especially in identifying the able among the disadvantaged. Arno Jewett notes the new views when he says:

> During the past twenty or more years, our views concerning the nature of intelligence and creativity have broadened considerably as a result of research and societal needs, as well as our realization of the effects of family and community upon pupil achievement. An example is the broad definition recently formulated by Paul Witty, who states: "Today the potentially gifted pupil is considered by many scholars as any child whose performance is consistently or repeatedly remarkable." Obviously, Dr. Witty takes us far beyond our traditional belief that intelligence is primarily an aptitude for scholastic achievement.[1]

A concise statement of the ways in which traditional concepts of the intelligence quotient have been modified in recent years has been made by James J. Gallagher in the table below:

CHANGING VIEWS OF I.Q. SCORES[2]

FROM THIS	TO THIS
A. I.Q. scores represent genetic potential.	I.Q. scores are a resultant of innate characteristics and learned experience.

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[1] Jewett, Arno. Letter to Lois S. Josephs and Virginia A. Elliott, April 19, 1968. *See also* Witty, Paul. "Twenty Years in Education of the Gifted." *Education* 88:3; September-October 1967.

[2] Gallagher, James J. *Teaching the Gifted Child.* Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1964. p. 6.

B. I.Q. scores are constant.	I.Q. scores may vary with development and experience.
C. Intelligence is unitary and consists of one general factor.	Intelligence is multidimensional and consists of many different cognitive abilities.
D. I.Q. scores measure practically all important aspects of cognitive abilities.	I.Q. scores represent good measures of certain cognitive abilities, but miss other important elements.

A new type of intelligence test is being developed by Raymond Bernard Cattell, who states: "My research indicates that there are two kinds of intelligence, fluid and crystallized, and that the former, which is independent of culture, can be measured as accurately as the latter. . . . Crystallized ability . . . appears as a related circle of abilities—verbal, numerical, reasoning—that normally are taught at school" [3] or that have been acquired through cultural exposure and experience and are dependent on memory. "Fluid intelligence," says Dr. Cattell, "is a general relation-perceiving capacity.[4] . . . Tests of fluid ability . . . have little relation to a well-stocked memory. They are culture fair perceptual and performance tests and those specially developed tests of judgment and reasoning which have been considered relatively culture free. . . . Fluid ability does have a role in numerical reasoning and even in verbal skills. It is . . . very powerful in inductive reasoning." [5] Dr. Jewett suggests that the practical value of using culture-fair tests in localities where language or cultural differences prevail is obvious for teachers wishing to identify potentially talented students in English. [6] They are at least one effort to measure intellectual abilities at present beyond the reach of standard IQ tests.

In addition to the limitations of the IQ test as an instrument for the identification of the able student, either advantaged or disadvantaged, a large number of other

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[3] Cattell, Raymond Bernard. "Are I.Q. Tests Intelligent?" *Psychology Today* 1:56, 58, 59; March 1968.

[4] *Ibid.*, p. 59.

[5] *Ibid.*, p. 58.

[6] Jewett, Arno. Letter to Lois S. Josephs and Virginia A. Elliott, April 19, 1968.

standardized tests yield information which gives only limited assistance. Tests of general vocabulary ability, though respected by some, essentially do not furnish specific information about a student's potential for an accelerated course in English. Certain recent modifications in the Cooperative English Tests, designed for several levels of the secondary school curriculum, have made these tests more helpful instruments, but popular tests of a different sort—tests on the terminology of traditional grammar, right-or-wrong usage, or correctness in the application of the suprasegmental features of writing—reveal little that is useful in identifying high ability in English.

Tests of language arts "skills" give some help but not enough, having generally two important shortcomings. To begin with, they ask students to write themes on topics outside the English curriculum, topics usually so general as to reveal little about a student's ability to write on the problems of his English course. Survey tests in reading ability present a similar problem as an index of ability in English. Certainly a high rate-of-reading score does not tell much about a student's potential for advanced work in English, since much of the material with which he must contend (metaphysical poetry, advanced linguistics texts, philosophical essays) will almost inevitably call for slow, careful reading. Then, too, there is much disagreement among authorities on reading as to what a score in "general" or "untimed" comprehension actually reveals. These tests measure such varied understandings that they provide no accurate picture of any student. Certainly ability in general comprehension (whatever that is) tells the teacher of English little about a student's ability to comprehend such matters as symbolic significance or stylistic originality, nor does it reveal how well a reader can discern central meaning in the murky prose of certain modern English grammarians.

Those aiming to identify the academically talented student in English, then, must go beyond the results of typically used standardized tests. In the field of English particularly, they must often depend on the intuitive judgment of the classroom teachers of the candidates in earlier years as evidenced in grades and teacher comment. "Jennie Schmaltz did superb work for me last year," says Miss Teacher. "She's awfully good in English." Here we face another difficulty: the validity of teachers' evaluations. We must always ask, "Who is the teacher and what is his background?"

A major obstacle in identifying academically talented students in English is the unfortunately large number of classroom teachers who have neither broad background nor profound interest in the discipline of English. With little awareness of what English is, mediocre teachers are in a poor position to judge effective student performance. Such teachers typically lack appreciation of aesthetic achievement and insight into such matters as symbolic meaning. They are clearly unsophisticated in their ability to judge soundness, originality, or incisiveness in verbal communication. Because of these shortcomings, such teachers frequently are not impressed with the creative responses of their bright students either to imaginative literature or in ordinary discourse.

Since the course taught by an inadequately prepared English teacher is often narrow, disjointed, and unimaginative, it may cause the talented student to become utterly bored with or contemptuous of the teacher's requirements. He may react with wisecracks or sarcasm, irritating the teacher beyond the possibility of objective evaluation of his work, and may as a result be regarded as a fault-finding, pretentious loudmouth whose contributions are unwelcome in any classroom activity.

Rigid curriculums, even when offered by experienced and knowledgeable teachers, can also interfere with the identification of gifted English students. Course offerings dominated by dull literary selections, repetitive exercises in grammatical analysis, long lists of strange words to be spelled, and passages of all sorts to be memorized rob the study of English of its vitality and consistently frustrate the talented student, who seeks intellectually refreshing and challenging issues. Gifted students do not become aroused by the platitudinous, the redundant, the conceptually empty. Their lack of real effort when required to perform in such curriculums can easily be misconstrued as lack of ability in the discipline. In such cases able students fail to be labeled "talented" because they have never been stimulated to demonstrate their talents.

A special problem lies in the frequent unwillingness of boys to display their true abilities in the English class. Most adolescent boys are intensely concerned with the judgment of their peers. They often look askance at academic achievement in general, especially suspicious and even derisive of superior achievement in English, a subject, for reasons too broad and complicated to delineate here, regarded by a large number of teen-age males as decidedly unmasculine. The boy who *likes* literature, who reacts with sensitivity to his reading, or who demonstrates incisiveness and accuracy in his written composition is too often branded as effeminate or queer by his high school peers.

One final obstacle to identifying gifted students in English exists because the content of English is almost totally verbal. In other courses in the high school curriculum, a variety of abilities are prized: the manipulation of numerical symbols, manual dexterity, meticulous habits and skillful techniques in the laboratory, or artistic ability. To succeed in the English classroom, however, a student must be able to understand and use his language with precision and variety in its written and spoken forms. As T. S. Eliot says in "Fragment of an Agon," "I gotta use words when I talk to you." [7] Without the ability to use words well, a student can never fully display how widely he perceives or how intensely he feels about the "stuff" of his English course. Furthermore, when the teacher fails to create meaningful classroom contexts for such verbal development, many students who could be articulate will make no progress toward skillful and versatile use of language. Teachers who do not give students the opportunity to use their linguistic abilities cannot validly judge them as gifted or ungifted in English.

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[7] Eliot, T. S. *Collected Poems, 1909-1935.* New York: Harcourt, Brace and Co., 1936. p. 152.

So much for obstacles. The fact that they exist means that many talented students of English continue to go unnoticed in high school populations. What criteria then will help in identifying the better students?

A major, and probably much overlooked, consideration is what potentially bright students do *outside* the English course, their interests and hobbies, especially any preoccupation with and achievement in artistic endeavors. Young people who genuinely like to play music, to paint, to write, and to discuss these activities apart from the classroom are often among the ranks of the talented. Young people's independent reading interests may also give evidence of high ability in the amount of reading, the maturity of choices, and the validity of critical reactions. Talented students generally read a great range of materials, from mystery thrillers to philosophical tracts. They will compulsively read, at an early age, distinctly "adult" works—the latest offerings in sex, violence, and decadence—and react with strong opinions of the books. The fact that they may not possess the emotional maturity to assimilate these works presents a most difficult problem. As Edwin H. Sauer states:

> The tragedy of Holden Caulfield in J. D. Salinger's remarkable book *The Catcher in the Rye* is that his "learning" and "sophistication" have advanced far beyond the natural needs and demands of his biological organism. At a time when his reading and experience have taught him much about the sordidness of life, he is not yet sufficiently removed from the world of cowboys and Indians. He is a boy with a Scotch and soda in one hand and a teddy bear in the other. Advanced literature used unjudiciously with gifted children can easily produce Holden Caulfields by the score.[8]

However much teachers and parents may deplore and attempt to control this tendency, the fact remains that it frequently indicates talent.

In their independent reading as well as their broad interests, the academically talented students in English will consistently favor the contemporary. They will prefer to read, view, discuss, and act upon matters which are relevant today. This may partially explain the failure of *Ivanhoe, Silas Marner,* and *Idylls of the King* to interest large numbers of bright high school students. Even Salinger's *Catcher* is passé, and Jack Kerouac has had his vogue. Today, perhaps because of the tumultuous times, talented students are reading James Baldwin, LeRoi Jones, or Terry Southern, "way out" though such authors may be to a shocked adult teaching gentry. The contemporaneity of students' reading interests is therefore worthy of a close look in the process of identification.

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[8] Sauer, Edwin H. *English in the Secondary School.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961. p. 212.

The ways in which bright students express their concern with the contemporary scene often reveals another of their typical characteristics: nonconformity. They may have little interest in following the rigid regimen of traditional curriculums or social codes and may flaunt their disrespect for the routine. When asked to "contribute" in class, they may respond with bizarre propositions. Such reaction may be pure affectation, or it may reflect a deep desire to escape the lockstep. The nature and development of nonconformist poses and reactions are important to note in the identification process. In fact, a helpful classroom technique, to be used early in the year for identifying gifted students, would be to have them read, listen to, and view a series of varied materials and then allow them to react in open-ended discussion or writing. To be revealing, however, their reactions must be uniformly tolerated by the teacher, who should be open to criticism of himself. Expressions of disapproval, horror, or disgust by the teacher will usually prevent students from being honest in open-ended situations and may especially prevent the often surprisingly profound and original reactions of the gifted.

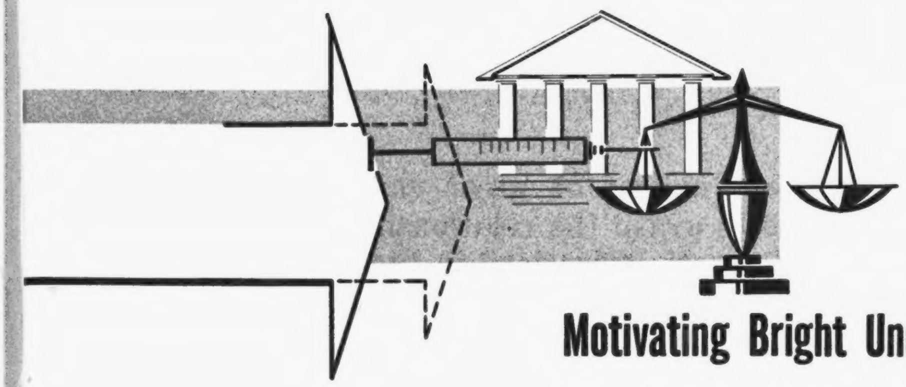
Classroom attitude and deportment as a whole will sometimes be indicative of superior ability in English. Several kinds of manifested attitudes are important to observe. One is the attitude toward the minutiae in class work. Bright students will often overlook the fine points of punctuation, will not come to grips with footnoting technicalities, and will misspell long, unusual words. Furthermore, they will resent edicts which force them to be precise and which penalize them if they are not. Certainly many talented students spell or punctuate flawlessly; the problem is to identify those who do not because of impatience or resentment. Another attitude which suggests ability, especially the ability to conceptualize orally, is the desire to "bug" the teacher. An able student will read implicit notions in seemingly clear statements and will force the teacher (until the teacher's patience runs out) continually to define abstract and technical terms, some of which may not be germane to the mainstream of the discussion. He may continue to question contentions and judgments. He may ask for restatements of positions which seem to others to be clearly presented. He will be eagerly suspicious of the clear-cut. Further vexation may result from the articulate manner in which the student defends and attacks points of view. The ability of gifted students to conceptualize orally, although it may cause occasional distress in the classroom, is a vital means of identification.

No search for the gifted in English can be meaningful without consideration of verbal ability, both oral and written, which underlies most of the characteristics already listed. Bright students show their verbal talent by larger speaking, reading, listening, and writing vocabularies than students of lesser ability. They can see connotational meaning more quickly and, in general, appreciate versatility in uses of language more readily. Moreover, they are often both curious and enthusiastic about linguistic structure (*not* in the formal sense) and meaning. They like to discover the meanings of new words, and they "get their kicks" out of juggling a variety of possible verbal intents, with original classroom utterances the result. In general, concern for and dexterity in the manipulation of verbal tools is a pretty solid credential for success in all areas of the study of English. Unfortunately, too many curriculums today do not adequately recognize, reveal, or reward this verbal curiosity and excellence, creating a difficulty in the identification of the able.

Originality in idea and expression is another characteristic of the gifted English student, with his imaginative responses and unique points of view. Rather than follow the time-honored paths, he perceives and communicates from a variety of other perspectives, attacking problems differently from the rest of the group and producing unusual comments and solutions. His originality may even brand him as odd and may create social problems for him. It is nonetheless often evidence of an especially able mind and as such becomes a factor which should not be overlooked.

Social readiness must also be viewed as an important factor in evaluating ability in the English classroom. Students from upper socioeconomic home situations have a considerable advantage in studying English. They have more opportunities to travel and meet a wider variety of people than their less affluent peers. They are provided with more, and more varied, reading materials in the immediate environment. Their linguistic development, particularly in diction and usage, is carefully observed and fostered by their elders. They are constantly corrected for verbal awkwardness and inaccuracy. In general, *school* means more to them; academic success or failure becomes a matter of cardinal importance early in the game and remains so throughout their school experience. In speeches on English teaching, Dwight Burton, head of Florida State University's Department of English Education, claims that in true ability grouping in English the socioeconomic factor would be one of the first in importance. He contends that the whole spectrum of verbal competency relates most directly to the environment from which the student has come. Students from the upper socioeconomic levels, therefore, are more likely to be identified as academically talented than those less fortunate but also talented. The problem here is to observe even more carefully the behavior of disadvantaged students in order to identify those who have talent in English.

The identification of the academically talented student in English, then, requires consideration of far more than test scores, of more, even, than superior achievement in the English class. Fully as important as either of those criteria is what students do with the "stuff" of English beyond the classroom. So often real talent in English is evident only out in a misty region beyond the ken of the English teacher.



CHAPTER IV

Motivating Bright Underachievers

ARNO JEWETT

MANY ACADEMICALLY talented students are self-motivating when they study and work in an educational environment which has resources that stimulate their curiosity, creativity, and social sensitivity. There is, however, the talented student who does not have an environment to which he can respond positively, who fails to achieve up to or near his capabilities, and who drifts with the academic stream until he leaves school.

Who is the underachieving bright student? In the eyes of the English teacher he is the pupil with low or average grades who has the intellectual and physical capacity to do *A* or *B* work and to rank among the top 15 to 20 percent in academic achievement in a class with a normal range of ability. Frequently he is a bright student who has a low self-concept which leads him to achieve poorly. According to A. Harry Passow, the gifted underachiever is "the student whose scholastic performance is far below that predicted on the basis of measured intelligence and aptitude." [1] Underachievement among bright boys seems to be at least twice as prevalent as among bright girls.[2]

Identification of Bright Underachievers

There are many clues to spotting the bright underachiever in the English class. Does a student receiving average or low grades possess a rich, extensive vocabulary? Is he a facile and fluent speaker? Does he show keen insight concerning the problems of great characters in literature? Is he able to grasp the relationship between cause and effect in dramatic situations in literature? Is he highly imaginative and creative in solving language problems and in writing poetry or fiction? Does he have a keen memory for facts and the ability to make intelligent judgments based on them? Does he have a wide range of reading interests? Is he able to do inductive thinking, especially about language, and to formulate sound generalizations about the way the English language works or fails to function? Of course, no bright underachiever is likely to possess or reveal all of these characteristics. But if he possesses a few, they are clues to his being gifted or talented in at least certain areas.

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[1] Passow, A. Harry. "Study of Underachieving Gifted." *Educational Leadership* 16: 121; November 1958.

[2] Gowan, John C. "The Underachieving Gifted Child, A Problem for Everyone." *Journal of Exceptional Children* 21: 247-49 ff.; April 1955.

The habit of underachievement may begin in the primary grades, where, if the able student is not offered sufficient challenge, encouraged to develop initiative, and given confidence in his ability, he is likely to develop habits of laziness, apathetic response, and carelessness. If neglected and unchallenged, he may learn to entertain himself by causing disturbances or by withdrawing into his self-sufficient world. By the time the able student has become an "intellectual delinquent," he is hard to recognize —having suppressed those signs of his ability which were not encouraged—and harder to help, for all the pressures which have pushed him away from high achievement have sometimes established in him strong antisocial attitudes toward other students and his teachers.

Miriam L. Goldberg and the few others who have done research in this field agree that the underachiever should be identified as early as possible in elementary school or junior high school. She states: "Ideally, potential achievers should be identified in the early grades and be helped to redirect their attitudes. ... There is some evidence not only that the class grades of gifted underachievers become poor during the high-school years, but that their performance on objective achievement and even aptitude tests shows signs of deterioration." [3] Elsewhere, Goldberg writes: "There is some indication that the junior high school is the point at which the problem of underachievement gets a good start." [4]

Effects of Underachievement

Thousands of words have been written about the increasing demand for trained manpower in America as well as in other parts of the world. There is little need to dwell here on the fact that the bright underachiever who drops out of high school represents a serious loss to society. It is worth noting, however, that if he is exceptionally talented or bright, he may be entering a long, devious path of dissatisfaction with himself and his associates if he ends his formal education early in life. On the other hand, when the bright underachiever stays in school and continues to do poorly, he may disrupt the educational development of other pupils by becoming a disciplinary problem or by requiring more of the teacher's time than the teacher can spare in the traditional school setting.

Possible Causes of Underachievement

Locating the possible cause of underachievement is an extremely complicated task. Research in the areas of motivation, self-concept, community-family influence, socioeconomic values, ethnic and cultural influence, teacher-pupil relationships, and study and work habits suggests many interrelated causes for underachievement in groups of bright pupils. When one studies individual underachievers, however, one discovers that each case is unique. Causes of underachievement, even for the individual, are multiple, interrelated, and difficult to discover.

First, there are the causes which are outside the realm of the school and frequently beyond the range of the teacher's capabilities. These include community values—for example, the respect which citizens, especially the vocal leaders, place on intellectual attainment. If influential citizens demand winning athletic teams, driver education courses during the school day, and light homework assignments, almost all bright students are bound to be influenced by these value judgments. As Conant has reported, "Probably one of the most important factors in determining whether a high school is providing adequately for the education of the academically talented is the attitude of the community." [5] Of course, national values are developed in a similar manner. When television, motion pictures, and other mass media blanket the public with images of fast-shooting bank robbers, high-living gangsters, and vegetating hippies, student attitudes toward education are bound to be affected.

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[3] Goldberg, Miriam L., and others. "A Three-Year Experimental Program at DeWitt Clinton High School To Help Bright Underachievers." *High Points* 41: 6-7; January 1959.

[4] Goldberg, Miriam L. "Recent Research on the Talented." *Teachers College Record* 60: 159; December 1958.

Bright underachievers are influenced by other environmental factors. One vital influence is family background. The educational level attained by the father and the cultural advantages within a child's home are related to his educational attainment and attitude toward academic study. Ethnic, religious, and national backgrounds of parents seem to be associated with the scholastic achievement of youth. There is positive evidence that within low socioeconomic groups a family's level of satisfaction with its present status and its educational aspirations for its children are related. Parents who are satisfied with their status may not try to help their children up the educational ladder. But parents who are discontented often encourage their bright children to "use education as the means to climb into the middle class." [6] There is also evidence that underachievement is great among academically talented children brought up in families of low socioeconomic status and among ethnic groups who, because of economic necessity or tradition, have not placed a high value on academic study. Hollinshead has written that—

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[5] Conant, James B. *The American High School Today.* New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959. p. 39.

[6] Kahl, Joseph A. "Educational and Occupational Aspirations of 'Common Man' Boys." *Harvard Educational Review* 23: 203; September 1953.

> The so-called "low class" lacks the urge for education—in part because of lack of ability, but in larger part because of lack of motivation in the home or surrounding environment. This lack of motivation stems from lack of cultural materials such as books, periodicals, and neighborhood cultural influences. The children of ministers and school teachers, however, reach the top rung of the educational ladder out of all proportion to their numbers.[7]

Recently, however, organized efforts of parents in ghettos and slums to improve education for their children indicate a changing attitude.

The climate within the home, the respect and warmth of parents for one another, the security and satisfactions afforded the child within the family, and the parental expectancies for the child's success are influences which affect all children—particularly the intellectually talented. Overdominant, inflexible parents and vacillating, laissez-faire parents are opposite types which cause trouble for many bright children. One study suggests that adolescent boys need to be able to identify themselves with an adequate father. Where the father is actually or "psychologically" absent or where he is extremely domineering, boys of superior ability may achieve far below their ability.[8] Overprotection and overindulgence of children may lead to continued dependence on the parent throughout adolescence and to the development of a lack of responsibility or initiative in the young man or woman. Lack of parental affection and guidance instills feelings of insecurity, worthlessness, and frustration within the child, feelings which are frequently reflected in classroom and out-of-school behavior.

Possible causes of underachievement by academically talented pupils often originate in the school or are accentuated by it. Many times the community, home, and school are mutually responsible for underachievement. In fact, high schools which underemphasize intellectual endeavor may be satisfying community desires or demands.

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[7] Hollinshead, Byron S. *Who Should Go To College?* New York: Columbia University Press, 1952. p. 37. Reprinted with permission of the author.

[8] Kimball, Barbara. "Case Studies in Educational Failure During Adolescence." *American Journal of Orthopsychiatry* 23: 406-15; April 1953.

Educators who have visited many different high schools in America usually agree that wide variations exist in the intellectual climate of schools. In fact, a visitor who follows students from one class to another within the same school may note equally wide variations. In some high schools, standards for achievement are in line with the capacities of all pupils, from slow to rapid learners. Scholarship is respected by pupils and staff. Great books are read and their significance discussed. Good English usage prevails when pupils converse in corridors and locker rooms and on the school grounds. Research and creative writing are being done by gifted pupils. The library is a busy, popular place. The *A* student rates high in class and out of class.

On the other hand, the climate in some schools is anything but intellectual. "Smart kids" take easy courses and get passing grades with a minimum of effort. Outside reading is regarded as a chore. The hero of the last athletic game is elected president of the student council even though he is barely passing his academic subjects. The trophy case is bulging with silver cups, and the library is empty of students. The bright student who dares to maintain an *A* average is, paradoxically, a "square" and an "egghead."

What makes the difference between these extremes? There are several interrelated causes. Among them are the teachers, the administration, the curriculum, and the instructional materials. Teachers who lack depth of knowledge in subject matter, who are unimaginative in their methods of teaching, who are narrow in their cultural interests, who are inflexible in their requirements, who accept mediocre work from the gifted, and who give most of their individual attention to the slow learner but expect the bright pupil to fend for himself are almost certain to encourage underachievement in their classes. In brief, persons who lack the qualities of an ideal teacher as discussed in Chapters VI and VIII are likely to be ill-suited as teachers of the academically talented.

The rapport between the teacher and the bright underachiever is extremely important. In general, praise for work well done seems to be effective with many bright underachievers. However, the academic record of each bright underachiever should be considered. W. D. Wall has pointed out that "failure in a general context of success has a different meaning from failure which is one more of a long chain. It is evident, too, that the degree to which a child feels himself acceptable to his teacher will condition markedly the effect of blame or failure on his attitudes to further effort." [9]

Although mild anxiety may motivate learning in some pupils, great anxiety may lead to inhibition of effort, frustration, and passivity in others. Goldberg states that—

> At DeWitt Clinton a high level of anxiety was found to drive one student to perform on the highest possible level, another to become disorganized, discouraged, and eventually to give up. . . .
>
> Many of the responses from pupils to questions about school success, difficulties, abilities, and other topics were answered in terms of . . . teachers. Doing well in a subject was usually related to a "good teacher," doing poorly to an unsympathetic or an unfair teacher. Their willingness to work in a subject also depended on their perception of the interest of the teacher. The students wanted teachers who merit "respect," who can "control the class," who "give you an interest in the subject," are "cheerful," and "understand the student. . . ."
>
> Upon entering high school, the underachievers seem more afraid of school than hostile toward it. They had accepted a standard of mediocrity and needed strong incentives to increase their efforts. The teacher recognized the importance of giving these students sympathy, but not pity; guidance, but not too early demands for independence. . . .
>
> The class climate was such that the boys felt free to come to the teacher with their personal as well as with school problems. At all times they found an attentive listener, ready to help with support and suggestions which would help the youngster gain self-confidence.[10]

When the pupils in the special class at DeWitt Clinton

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[9] Wall, W. D. "The Wish To Learn—Research into Motivation." *Educational Research* 1: 30; November 1958.

[10] Goldberg, Miriam L., and others, *op. cit.*, pp. 6-19.

High School were assigned to a different type of teacher, trouble began. The new teacher had worked successfully with honors classes. She had maintained extremely high standards and had made no allowances for failure to meet her standards. Under this type of teacher, the bright underachievers soon rebelled.

> The boys and the teacher were in conflict throughout the semester. The teacher, expecting high quality performance, was unable to accept the erratic, tardy, and often slipshod work of the students. The techniques which she had found eminently successful with honors classes over the years were completely ineffectual in this situation. Insistence on "toeing the mark" led to ever greater resistance which expressed itself in poor work, disturbing behavior in class, "collaboration" on assignments, and constant chatter and giggling.[11]

In the Portland study of underachievers and high achievers, "the complaint about teachers which was voiced much more often by underachievers than by high achievers was that teachers were nagging, bossy, unsympathetic, and generally emotionally unsupportive." [12]

Ways To Help the Bright Underachiever

What can the English teacher and others do to motivate the bright underachiever and to prevent other academically talented pupils from becoming underachievers? First, teachers must help all pupils, especially bright ones, to understand the lifelong values of English. Bright pupils are most critical. Today, with the publicity concerning science, engineering, electronics, and exploration of space, teen-age boys are often highly motivated to excel in mathematics and science. Academically talented pupils who are doing *A* work in these subjects may be earning *C*'s in English even though they have the aptitude to do outstanding work in English too. Many students fail to understand or accept the fact that a thorough knowledge of English is basic to success in all subjects requiring language and reading ability. And many of them are not aware of the growing importance of English to leaders in all fields. The day of the semiliterate leader has ended.

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 23 ff.

[12] Portland Public Schools, Multnomah County, School District No. 1. "Study of Under-Achieving High School Students." *The Gifted Child in Portland.* Portland, Oreg.: the Schools, 1959. p. 133.

Bright students, as well as others, need to understand the purpose and importance of every assignment which is given them. Boys often react negatively to busy-work assignments, such as keeping scrapbooks to be filled with pictures illustrating poems copied from books. They also resent being drilled on usage, grammar, and spelling words which they have already learned. Besides pointing out the aims of each assignment, teachers usually need to include specific suggestions on how to study and read the material assigned. Bright underachievers frequently need to acquire good study skills and habits.

Supervised study periods during the school day give the teacher an opportunity to help the underachiever fix his attention on the work to be done and on ways of doing it properly. They provide time for the teacher to have conferences with pupils about weaknesses in written work and to offer guidance on individual needs. Such study periods make it possible for the underachiever who has inadequate study conditions at home to work without the distractions of playmates, television, and telephone calls. At school he can study where he has reference books and a friendly instructor at his elbow. Modular scheduling and resource centers which provide for independent study are innovations which may develop self-discipline and responsibility in students.[13]

The bright underachiever often lives for today, forgets the past, and fails to prepare for the future. He has no realistic long-range goals. In fact, he may not have worthy short-range goals either. Or he may not realize the relationship between his present level of achievement and his goals. The Portland Study found that "underachievers more often than high achievers viewed academic achievement as incompatible with enjoying life and having fun, being well-rounded and well-adjusted, being friendly and free of smugness, and having a good personality." [14] Composition assignments on topics such as "What I Plan To Be Doing Five Years from Now," "Earning My Living Ten Years from Now," "The Kind of Adult I Want To Be," and "The Education I Need for the Life I Want To Live" will cause the bright pupil to do some thinking about relationships between what he does today and what he wants to do tomorrow. The values of education can be made clear through discussion of the writings of Jesse Stuart, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Sir Francis Bacon, Sir Richard Livingston, Cardinal Newman, and many other authors.

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[13] Education U.S.A. "Verdict Issued on Flexible Scheduling." *Education U.S.A.* April 15, 1968. p. 1.

Volumes have been written about the motivating force of interest and curiosity. The interests of adolescents change frequently and suddenly; therefore, teachers who are not close observers of young people during out-of-school hours may not be aware of their new interests. Teen-agers' adoration of a singer may fade overnight; boys' interest in hot rods may shift to motorcycles; and adolescents' excitement about science fiction may metamorphose into an interest in astronomy. Sometimes the educational hobbies which an introverted underachiever enjoys in his workshop or laboratory at home are unknown to his teachers. Even the research projects that he may be doing in a superior manner in his history, science, or geometry class may not be within the ken of his English teacher. By consulting other teachers of bright underachievers, the English teacher can occasionally discover in these pupils special interests which can be used to motivate their composition work and extend their reading.

Occasionally, bright pupils rebel because they are constantly competing to the limit of their ability with more gifted pupils in their class. Moderate competition with one's intellectual or athletic peers can be exciting and profitable. But few English teachers would want to compete regularly with a Robert Frost, a John Ciardi, or a Dorothy Parker; nor would many amateur athletes care to compete daily against a Jim Ryun, a Jack Nicklaus, or a Willie Mays. Bright underachievers may occasionally need less competition with very brilliant classmates and more competition with themselves. English teachers can help these pupils try to do better than they have in the past: to compare the effectiveness of a composition which they have just finished with one they did a month ago; and to compare the quality and quantity of reading they are doing this semester with that of a previous semester.

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[14] Portland Public Schools, *op. cit.*, p. 132.

Extraclass activities can be used to motivate bright underachievers in English. Those who doubt the value of taking sentences apart through parsing and diagraming year after year will often accept the need to create clear, concise, and complete sentences for a sports story for the school newspaper. The job of a cub reporter, the role of a minor character in a one-act play, or the duties of a club secretary may help an underachiever to realize the value of English and to experience the self-satisfaction which is one reward for superior achievement.

Conferences with parents of bright underachievers can sometimes help parents to recognize or appreciate the unusual potentialities of their children. Working with the school counselor and parents, the teacher may help the student to plan to attend college and to investigate ways of paying his expenses. Although the main responsibility for college guidance usually rests with the school counselor or principal, the English teacher can often give students advice and encouragement. Since many bright underachievers seem to underestimate their own ability, the teacher or counselor should help them become aware of their latent talents.

A few bright underachievers need diagnosis and treatment by specialists in other fields. In instances where the pupil is severely disturbed or maladjusted or has a physical defect, he should receive the attention of a psychiatrist, physician, or other qualified professional. Difficult disciplinary cases should obviously be referred to the counselor and in some cases to the proper administrative authorities. However, because most pupils study English throughout high school and because language is the foundation of success in other academic subjects as well as in life, the English teacher has an extraordinary opportunity to help the underachiever find new motivations and chart his academic course. After all, it is the teacher—as research has proved repeatedly—who makes the major difference in the quality of education obtained by students.

CHAPTER V

The Gifted Disadvantaged Student in English

LOIS S. JOSEPHS

THE FAILURE of schools to develop the creative abilities and intellectual capacities of disadvantaged students is a demonstrated fact. The reasons for this failure grow increasingly clear. If studies in the psychology of learning tell us anything, they [illegible] us that children learn best, first, when their educational experiences seem to have close relevance and, second, when the rewards for achievement are both immediate and relevant to their lives. On both scores the usual school program fails the disadvantaged child, especially if he is gifted. A curriculum suffused with white, middle-class values speaks of worlds which often have little meaning or interest to the child of the ghetto streets or the rural slum. The rewards of learning—good grades, the teacher's praise, the promise of eventual economic opportunity, higher education—likewise mean little to a teen-age youth who knows what real and immediate pleasures are to be gained from the life of the gang and the street: sex, drugs, cars, instant money through out-of-school efforts, whether legal or otherwise. The tragedy of failure is greatest when the victims of apathy are students with undeveloped intellectual ability. How can schools enlist the energy and creativity of such children? Do the language arts—the center of the child's education—have any especially productive answers?

Despite difficulties and complexities, certain constants do appear in any discussion of how to teach the gifted disadvantaged child in the English classroom: for example, there is the assumption that intrinsic values in the language arts are similar for every child, gifted or not, disadvantaged or not. Northrop Frye defines what he sees as the essence of the discipline in his book *The Educated Imagination;* literature, language, and communication ultimately enlarge the world of experience in a structured yet simultaneously imaginative sense.[1] Similarly, David Holbrook suggests that "nothing is more important than developing the child's capacity to explore and express his inner world, realize his personal identity."[2] A synthesis of these related ideas implies that within the very best language arts classrooms, the meaningful, enlarging experience develops an educated imagination, which gradually perceives itself within a world of varied aesthetic, philosophical, and social stimuli.

The attempt to write a specific curriculum for so ambitious a goal is probably foolish; however, useful suggestions for method are available from a number of sources. Two promising ideas have emerged from the Dartmouth Seminar: the English classroom viewed as a workshop situation and the English classroom viewed as a living experience in drama.[3] The imaginative manipulation of a workshop situation can provide opportunities for a variety of simultaneous activities that involve significant exchanges between teacher and students. In a workshop environment, easily available tapes and headphones may allow for the grouping of some students to free teachers, who can then function more casually and intimately with small groups. Students may effectively and emotionally respond to an appropriate, well-chosen story taped to include incidental and provocative questions sporadically inserted to hold interest and reinforce understanding. While some students are listening to tapes of one kind or another, others may wish to communicate on a drawing board or write about some current involvement. The teacher, then, may act as a subtle and casual director, or he may interact with still another group. Ideally, media of all kinds should be easily accessi ble to facilitate the structured informality of the situation.

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[1] Frye, Northrop. *The Educated Imagination.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964. p. 27.

[2] Muller, Herbert J. *The Uses of English.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967. p. 116.

[3] *Ibid.,* p. 32.

The English classroom as a workshop fosters a learning experience out of which intellectual forces of the discipline gradually emerge. Any creative combination of tools and methods can build toward an increasing sophistication in the perception of literature and the other arts as they reflect the drama of human existence. Slides are especially effective in this regard if they provoke discussion of parallel or dissonant concepts and attitudes: for example, a sequence of people and animals caged in a variety of ways, some literal, some metaphorical, some voluntary, others involuntary, and then a frank discussion of such topics as the relative differences between disciplined control for an inner satisfaction as opposed to enforced control; a hostile white child eating, a hostile, fearful Negro child eating, a slide of the two together, a slide of a Negro and white child playing marbles, then a stimulating discussion of love and hate in the social milieu; gory slides of executions followed by a reading of Carl Sandburg's poem "The Hangman at Home," then a thoughtful discussion of how one might feel as an executioner or of the reasons for capital punishment.

The second suggestion of the Dartmouth Seminar poses the question of how to use drama in the English classroom. Role playing need not be a childish game but rather a serious and exciting way of guiding students to more effective communication and to more perceptive understanding of the relationship of literature to life. Videotape equipment is especially useful here; from informal role playing, students can learn to create their own television skits—write, direct, produce, act. The disadvantaged gifted student is better prepared to perceive the dilemma of Tom in *The Glass Menagerie* after he creates or invents a dramatic incident in his own search for identity.

Another useful suggestion for the gifted disadvantaged student involves exploitation of the senses; appeal to the eye and the ear, even to the tactile sense whenever possible, is usually productive as teaching strategy. New, frank, and sometimes shocking contemporary works of art often appeal to the senses, provoke interest, and, most important of all, effectively precede exposure to the traditional or the less sensational. Emotionally compelling for shock quality, such choices have relevance to the world of the student: trips to an exhibit of kinetic sculpture—the chaos of modern life; considerations of avant-garde plays, even those as sensually graphic as Jones's *The Dutchman*—the conflicts of modern life; informal discussions of provocative slides—the visual confrontation of truth in modern life; sudden, unexpected, but meaningful and frank attempts at writing—self-expression in modern life. These students are often highly sophisticated, having learned to use their senses for survival in the ghetto street or on the impoverished farm; many of them have discovered life, perhaps prematurely, on an earthy, realistic, but highly charged level which the teacher must recognize and with which he must compete.

Method, then, must provide for creative and experiential learning, more essential to this student than to his middle- or upper-class peer because he is less apt to respond to the intellectual and the abstract. In her book *Teaching Strategies for the Culturally Disadvantaged*, Hilda Taba emphasizes the importance of the emotional impact: the novel, the unexpected, the dramatic—these then gradually leading to the intellectual content of the discipline. She also emphasizes the importance of the familiar, of the relevant, within which framework knowledge then grows meaningful.[4] Instead of *Great Expectations* as the first work assigned to extend perception of how man achieves understanding of himself, Baldwin's *Notes of a Native Son*—his moving account of gradual awareness in growth from bitterness to understanding—may sensibly precede the less immediately relevant analysis of Pip.

These students have searched for wisdom with their eyes and ears, familiar tools of daily living—tools that can be manipulated to bring about further perception, awareness, and appreciation. I suspect that for the gifted disadvantaged student compensatory education is a necessity. I also suspect that failure with such students is inevitable if the teacher disregards their experiences or lack of them, because it is essential to synthesize their narrow intellectual climate with the broader cultural milieu. Thus such a program might well encompass a wider spectrum of the humanities than does the traditional language arts curriculum, especially as it now exists on the senior high level.

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[4] Taba, Hilda. *Teaching Strategies for the Culturally Disadvantaged.* Chicago: Rand McNally & Co., 1967. p. 75.

Such suggestions are purposely indefinite, perhaps even vague, because, with the gifted disadvantaged student, the role of the teacher is crucial. It is especially important for the teacher to ignore his expectations, to expect and accept temporary disappointments. If flexibility, tact, and quick thinking in handling student response are important in all teaching situations, they are especially vital in working with the gifted disadvantaged student, who is usually undermotivated and intellectually insecure. The teacher of any gifted student, through provocative use of question and answer, the literature text, and the student's own language, communicates the essence of English; the teacher of the gifted disadvantaged student may achieve an equally sophisticated level of learning only after long, patient, carefully devised interaction—only after the use of a variety of techniques, methods, and experiences. Like every teacher he must love and believe in his discipline, but, more important, he must love and understand each individual he is teaching.

Really knowing each student in a classroom situation is never easy. The school social worker is easily critical and glibly condescending toward the not always patient teacher who rarely has the opportunity to communicate with a single student in casual and uninterrupted conversation; the teacher of the gifted disadvantaged faces constant harassment by demanding and difficult individuals in group situations. The gifted disadvantaged cannot be successfully treated as a group, even though, unfortunately, they are a group in most school situations. Thus somehow the teacher must learn to regard each student in an individual, personal way: a quick but significant comment to one or two as they come and go; a friendly word about a new dress or sweater; a question about health, about a small but noticeable sore on the mouth perhaps; or a gesture that suggests warmth, perhaps the right kind of touching, always a token of acceptance and affection. Only after long periods of acceptance, affection, and patience can the expected group interaction begin to show results—the give-and-take of ideas.

Mutual acceptance is also important. Whereas the ordinary student responds from a secure base, the gifted disadvantaged student first must learn to trust the teacher. Before he responds with any degree of intellectual power, he must have confidence that the teacher will accept his response. Intellectually, he responds more slowly. As Frank Riessman says, "There is little doubt that the deprived child typically works on academic problems in a slower manner. This is shown in many different ways: he requires more examples before seeing a point, arriving at a conclusion, or forming a concept." [5]

In addition to patience with this slower response, agility on the part of the teacher is vital: the ability to provide individual attention by recommending varied activities as the need arises; the sensitivity to perceive talent in the slow, hesitant response; the ingenuity to switch from one plan to another, from one teaching method to another, because of the class's unexpected boredom or short attention span. Instant shifts require immense control on the part of a teacher who, with excitement and care, has planned a lesson that somehow fails.

Excitement is generated within a flexible milieu where change is the rule when relevant and valuable to the moment. Well-calculated shifts require constant alertness to the mood of the class. They impose an arduous and demanding pace on a teacher. They ask for responsiveness to immediate situations: sensing hostility or boredom and suddenly deciding to read "Death of a Dropout," an excellent and moving account of a bright, energetic student who failed to find his way in the system—intellectually therapeutic if one member of the class has suddenly been dropped for similar reasons that might also easily apply to others in the class. [6] Again, in that same period, the teacher could switch to reading a version of "Pandora's Box," often fascinating to mythologically deprived students who recognize the importance of human hope, especially within the context of "Death of a Dropout" and the similar experiences of their own lives. Shifts may be even more sudden. One teacher stopped reading after the obviously puzzling expression "old wives' tale," explained what it meant, and cited the example of her own fear of wearing boots indoors because of her grandmother's admonition that to do so was bad for one's eyes. Recognizing student interest in the subject, the teacher ignored the original story to allow class discussion of old wives' tales that had influenced the group.

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[5] Riessman, Frank. "The Slow Gifted Child." *The Disadvantaged Learner.* (Edited by Staten W. Webster.) San Francisco, Calif.: Chandler Publishing Co., 1966. p. 260.

Also especially important is the teacher's recognition of what these students are good at—the perceptive appreciation of an untutored mind, of the unique and surprising way in which it operates, and of the fact that it may not instantly respond to literary works traditionally viewed as important. In *Issues in the Preparation of Teachers of English*, John S. Gerrietts suggests that "far too many prospective teachers, as well as teachers who come back for further study, merely want to study exactly the works that they will teach. This reveals a horrifying misconception of what their roles should be." [7] If this situation is unfortunate for teachers of students from middle- and upper-class homes, it is especially unfortunate for teachers of gifted disadvantaged students who require more perceptive guidance. The teacher must have the full breadth of his education at the service of his students, choosing works that are appropriate and ignoring absolute standards. Research indicates that, with these students especially, what is right cannot be "what the textbook says or the teacher expects so that students distrust their own responses, the independent judgment that should count most." [8] A variety of studies have indicated the wasted efforts of teachers who are too concerned with correctness in writing.[9] Gifted disadvantaged students tend to lose the essence of their own unique creativity in a labyrinth of rules and regulations; they lose the vitality of their language. Later, as they mature, as their experiences increase and their motivation develops, they learn the social graces of correctness in formal communication. It would seem far more valuable at crucial stages in their intellectual development to emphasize variations in dialect patterns or anthropological aspects of language study rather than to insist upon correctness. If middle- and upper-class students benefit from this approach, the gifted disadvantaged student benefits even more as the teacher subtly provides him with a significant linguistic identity in a seemingly alienated intellectual world that may appear obliquely hostile.

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[6] Sideman, Janet. "Death of a Dropout." *New Republic* 156: 11-14; June 3, 1967.

[7] Gerrietts, John S. "What Literature—and Why?" *Issues in the Preparation of Teachers of English.* (Edited by Raymond Crisp.) Urbana: University of Illinois, Illinois State-Wide Curriculum Study Center in the Preparation of Secondary School English Teachers, 1967. p. 23.

Perhaps, in essence, the English teacher is a unique middleman for these students, who must manipulate the establishment until they reach a stronger and more secure intellectual position. Thus the teacher of the gifted disadvantaged student plays a supportive role; somehow he represents an academic force in the establishment, while simultaneously he maintains himself as a humanitarian and sympathetic figure. He supports his students in their difficult attempts to discover a way in the milieu in which intellectually they should belong though socially they sense it to be alien, strange, and hostile. Often the teacher has to do so without the support of parents who, like their children, must be cajoled to understand, accept, and appreciate. Frequently, even the administration is unfriendly to seemingly hectic experiments that deviate from the status quo.[10] Somehow, though it appears paradoxical, this teacher must reflect a culture, impart a wisdom, yet take a stand in the student's corner under what are often difficult and disturbing circumstances.

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[8] Crow, Lester D.; Murray, Walter I.; and Smythe, Hugh H. *Educating the Culturally Disadvantaged Child.* New York: David McKay Co., 1966. p. 69.

[9] For example, Neville, Margaret M. "What Composition and Why." *Issues in the Preparation of Teachers of English, op. cit.*, pp. 25-28.

If the teacher of the gifted disadvantaged student is an academic mentor and friend, he must also be a keeper of discipline in this often chaotic atmosphere. Yet strictness in the traditional sense only compounds the problems. Although every teacher should be firm, not ever appearing to be "walked over," conventional methods of discipline for gifted disadvantaged students usually result in the disastrous quiet of an intellectual and emotional void. It is difficult to bring order into chaotic lives especially when that order must be imposed by interest and affection rather than by fear of suspension.

Thus rewards to the teacher of the gifted disadvantaged student come slowly, in occasional spurts of success rather than in daily progress—in the very gradual awareness of subtle, not always definable rapport. But there are the moments of revelation: the embarrassed teacher who suddenly recognizes significant achievement when his Negro students respond with analytical condescension to the pejorative use of the word "nigger" by a white guard at an exhibit. (Their response to the guard's hostility resulted from a frank and obviously productive discussion of the word "mick" in Ring Lardner's "Champion.") But moments of revelation are sporadic, and infinite patience is required of the English teacher who dedicates his abilities to the gifted disadvantaged student. He lives with hope and patience, often with discouragement, and always with the awareness that "there are no unique methods for teaching gifted children," only an appreciation of "what the gifted child brings to the situation," his intrinsic value and worth.[11] Here is the character of all good teaching, but perhaps for the gifted disadvantaged student good teaching must be more so.

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[10] *See*, for example: Kozol, Jonathan. *Death at an Early Age*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1967. 240 pp. and Kohl, Herbert. *Thirty-Six Children*. New York: New American Library, 1967. 227 pp.

[11] Passow, A. Harry. "Enrichment of Education for the Gifted." *Education for the Gifted*. (Edited by Nelson B. Henry.) Fifty-Seventh Yearbook, Part II, National Society for the Study of Education. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958. p. 193.

Why undergo the struggle? Benjamin DeMott explains why in the closing lines of his journal of a teaching experience in the Tougaloo Summer Enrichment Program for gifted disadvantaged students. While he recognizes the disappointments, the ironic, ambiguous successes, and the constant frustrations, he also recognizes the great needs of these students in today's world: "Revolution is not a word but a pointing toward what obviously, absolutely must happen."[12]

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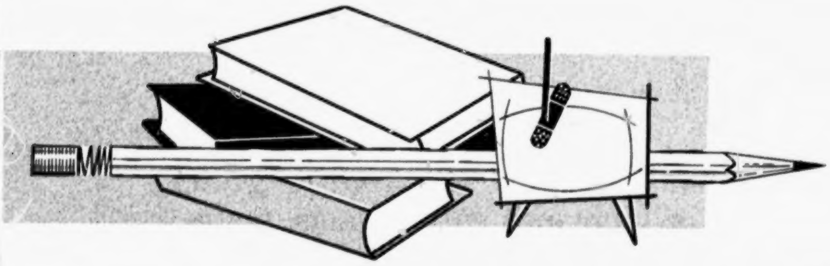
[12] DeMott, Benjamin. "Encounter in Mississippi." *Saturday Review* 51: 51; January 20, 1968.



CHAPTER VI

Techniques for Teaching the Talented English Student—Some Random Notes

FRED H. STOCKING

THE WORD "talented," like "English," has a lot of meanings. An English student may be called talented because he has not allowed his parents, friends, and teachers to suppress his wild and exuberant imagination, or because he loves to read and can therefore draw on a wide range of literary experience, or because he can make sharp intellectual distinctions and quickly spot flaws in logic, or because he is unusually sensitive to connotations of literary language, or because he writes orderly and lucid essays.

Because "talented" is such a slippery term, the most exciting English curriculum I have recently seen in operation makes no attempt to isolate either "talented" students or "slow learners." Nor does it distinguish between the eleventh and twelfth graders; rather it assumes that by the end of the tenth grade most students have had all the "traditional" or "conventional" English courses they can stand. During their last two years the students are not grouped by the teachers; they group themselves. Each student elects a series of six-week courses from a great variety of offerings which reflect the special interests of the teaching staff. A student may choose, for instance, among courses such as "Satire," "Folk Songs," "The Literature of Minority Groups," "Comedy," "Contemporary Poetry," "The Literature of Sports," "One-Act Plays," "Mark Twain," "The Film," "Shakespeare," "Informal Essays," "The Literature of Protest," "Negro Poetry," "Oratory, Sermons, and Editorials," "The Short Story," "The Comic Strip as Literature," "Problems in Literary Criticism," "The Art of Biography," and "The

Literature of Propaganda." In short, the students group themselves on the basis of their own enthusiasms, tastes, or inclinations; and those of greater ability work with the slow learners, who often turn out to be "faster" than either their IQ's or their earlier teachers would have predicted.

The teaching techniques used in such courses are as varied as the teachers conducting them, except for one common practice: the universal suppression of lecturing. In all classes the students explore, under the guidance of the teacher, material in which they think they are—or would like to be—interested. The teacher asks crucial questions, helps the students learn how to distinguish between answers that are intelligent and responsible and those that are silly and irrelevant, improvises new questions on the basis of student observations, makes the discussions stick—or return—to the specific subject under study instead of dissolving into sloppy chatter about Life, and helps the students limit the subjects and organize the materials for both oral and written reports, at the same time urging the students to believe that if these reports are more sprightly than dull the world will not come to an end.

There are no big research papers in these six-week courses, the assumption being that significant research is something a student does only at a later stage in his study, when learning that *ibid.* must be underlined will be meaningful because there will be an intelligible reason for using *ibid.* at all. The papers and oral reports are short and specific: not on Hemingway, but on what Hemingway means by the word "happy" in his title "The Short Happy Life of Francis Macomber," with the explanation based on what the story actually *does* to provide a special definition for this familiar word.

Even in such a program, however, where students are separated with reference to interest instead of "talent," any teacher will want to confront students with intellectual challenges, and some students are ready for tougher challenges than others. These challenges may take the form of either a study of more intricate and subtle literary works than the other students can handle or the evaluation of literary criticism.

The market is now flooded, for example, with collections of critical essays on individual works and authors. Instead of using these essays as materials for research papers in which the student learns how to punctuate quotations and footnotes, the teacher might use them as documents which will help the student learn how to ask tough-minded questions leading to estimations of the accuracy and worth of each piece of critical writing. What aspects of the work or works interest the critic? What is the problem or issue he is investigating? What aspects or issues is he therefore neglecting? In short, what are the limitations of his concern? How valid is his reasoning? In what specific ways do his conclusions enlighten one's understanding of a particular work? Or *don't* they have this effect? Rigorous explorations of such questions will help the student to attack criticism critically, to think for himself, to begin forming his own bases for his own judgments, to distinguish between mere fluff and the literary criticism which is intellectually rigorous.

Let him study, first, a selection of Robert Frost's poems, including "Bereft," "Acquainted with the Night," "Design," "Desert Places," "Birches," "Once by the Pacific," "The Gift Outright," "The Most of It," and "Range Finding," in order to sample the scope of Frost's responses to life. Then let him read Lionel Trilling's address in honor of Frost's eighty-fifth birthday and J. Donald Adams' attack on Trilling, and let him decide where *he* stands in this quarrel, and why.[1] Or let him read the differing estimates of Frost presented by Malcolm Cowley and Randall Jarrell, defining the ground on which each writer bases his evaluation, pausing to study individual poems which the two critics mention, deciding the extent to which they disagree, and arriving at a clear statement of the purposes and relative merits of the two essays.[2]

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[1] Greenberg, Robert A., and Hepburn, J. G., editors. *Robert Frost: An Introduction.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1961. 177 pp.

[2] Both are reprinted in Cox, J. M., editor. *Robert Frost: A Collection of Critical Essays.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1962. 205 pp.

Another kind of challenge which a superior student can enjoy is the exploration of textual variations. Emily Dickinson's poems offer a splendid array of critical tampering which can be investigated for the purpose of defining the critical standards exercised by her editors in changing her poems, as well as for a deeper understanding of Dickinson's own art.

A student might well go to work, for example, on the editorial tamperings with the following poem:

It will be Summer—eventually.
Ladies—with parasols—
Sauntering Gentlemen—with Canes—
And little Girls—with Dolls—

Will tint the pallid landscape—
As 'twere a bright Bouquet—
Tho' drifted deep, in Parian—
The Village lies—today—

The Lilacs—bending many a year—
Will sway with purple load—
The Bees—will not despise the tune—
Their Forefathers—have hummed—

The Wild Rose—redden in the Bog—
The Aster—on the Hill
Her everlasting fashion—set—
And Covenant Gentians—frill—

Till Summer folds her miracle—
As Women—do—their Gown—
Or Priests—adjust the Symbols—
When Sacrament—is done—[3]

(Edited Version)

Nature's Changes[4]

The edited version has been
deleted due to copyright
restrictions.

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[3] Dickinson, Emily. *The Collected Poems of Emily Dickinson.* (Edited by Thomas H. Johnson.) Boston: Little, Brown and Co., 1960. pp. 162-63.

Although study of this massacre, with guidance from the teacher, might well lead to extraordinary literary insights, the student would realize that these words are being spoken on a day in late spring when the village is covered with a deep snow which resembles lovely white marble. On such a day it is nearly impossible to believe that summer will ever come. You can state confidently "It will be summer," but then you pause before adding with a weary sigh, "eventually."

Then the speaker thinks ahead to the process of summer's arrival and—later—summer's departure. She thinks first (it's easy to imagine the author herself as the speaker) of springtime people, how colorful they will be—ladies with parasols, gentlemen sauntering with canes, and little girls with dolls. These people will provide the first touches of color to "tint the pallid landscape" and form a bright bouquet. This metaphor of a bouquet already identifies the people with the flowers.

Later, these colorful people will be joined by the lilacs, bees, wild roses, asters, and finally (in late August or early September) gentians. These flowers, like the ladies and gentlemen and children, set the summer season's "fashion"—a word normally associated with society, thereby enforcing the earlier identification of the people

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[4] Reprinted by permission of the publishers and the Trustees of Amherst College from Thomas H. Johnson, Editor, *The Poems of Emily Dickinson*, Cambridge, Mass.: the Belknap Press of Harvard University Press, Copyright 1951, 1955, by The President and Fellows of Harvard College.

with the natural world. Together they all set the fashions of the seasons, or perhaps it would be more accurate to say they follow the fashions of the seasons.

The people behave like flowers, and the flowers behave like people. Just as ladies, at the end of the season, fold up their summer gowns for the winter, so the summer folds up its garments of lilacs and roses and gentians.

Actually, the "summer folds her *miracle*," a word that implies not only the almost unbelievable wonder of the multicolored garments of flowers, but the fact that the process of blossoming is beyond all rational accounting. The religious suggestions of this word "miracle" are enforced by several other items. The gentians, for instance, in producing their frilly blossoms, are not merely exhibiting a summer fashion in dress but are also fulfilling a covenant. And the ending of the summer season is likened to an ending of the ritual of sacrament, when the priest rearranges his religious symbols.

A priest operates in a traditional institution; by virtue of the apostolic succession, among other things, he is keenly aware of an intimate communication with the past. His rites are not arbitrary, fickle, or improvised; they are identical with ceremonies conducted centuries ago. Similarly, the aster's fashion is "everlasting," not a passing commercial fancy, like social fashions. And the bees, with a powerful sense of tradition, hum the tune of their forefathers rather than—presumably—the latest tune. Likewise, the loaded lilacs have been bending in just this way for many years.

The student would come to realize that what we feel by the end of the poem is a pleasurable harmony, if not identity, between human society and the natural world. Both man and nature celebrate the passing of the seasons—ordained by some higher power—by doing what one always does for a ritual: by dressing up appropriately. The external colors, whether of ladies' parasols or gentians' frills, and the external behavior, whether sauntering or humming, are symbolic expressions of an inner response to a mighty and mysterious power. Every season is a distinct phase in the orderly ritual of time, in a cycle in which all forms of life—animal and vegetable and human—socially and harmoniously participate.

The student could then discover what happened when editors came along with a rigid set of critical principles. By imposing their own standards on the poem, Dickinson's editors discovered obvious "flaws" which they could easily "correct." We don't know exactly what went on in their heads, but it was probably something like this:

1. "Every poem should have a title. Therefore we'll call this 'Nature's Changes.' " Already they have put the main focus on external nature. It is nature that changes, not ourselves.

2. "Since this is a poem about Nature's changes, all that stuff about people in the first stanza is superfluous. Throw it out."

3. "Anyhow, anybody knows that a bouquet is made out of flowers, not out of parasols and canes and dolls. Furthermore, when the flowers come out in the springtime, the landscape will begin to 'glow.' " (The author didn't say "glow"; she said "tint," and she did not mean "glow.")

4. "That third stanza is a horror! Why, it doesn't have one single rhyme. Furthermore, 'despising' is something people do, not insects—though insects do seem to have something like a memory. So we must change 'despise' to 'forget.' "

5. "To smooth out the metrics and to civilize the poem a little more, we must cut out that word 'wild.' "

The student would discover that the result tends to be a "pretty" poem indicating how, yes indeed, Nature certainly does change! And isn't it oh so exciting for us humans to watch the seasons come and go! Why, in some ways these changes are almost human! The seasons have fashions just like ours. The summer folds up her miracle just like a lady folding her gown, or a priest putting things away after the church service! The realization that we humans are an integral part—or victims even—of Nature's changes, that the everlasting cycle of time includes us, whether we like it or not, has been almost entirely removed.

A study of this kind, however, should be undertaken *only if the teacher has been granted the necessary time for working with the student or students involved.* The words in italics should be screamed, because of a widespread superstition that talented students should be allowed to do independent study, and that independent study requires *less* work of the teacher. The brutal fact is that responsible independent study usually requires *more* work of a teacher.

The talented or ambitious student of goodwill is likely to take on more than he can handle, to get sidetracked without realizing it, to make a mistake inadvertently and then to compound that error at an alarming rate, to get confused, to get discouraged, or to lapse into an uncritical acceptance of what other people have written. For this reason he should meet regularly with his teacher; and the teacher should have time to duplicate at least some of his reading, to keep informed of his progress, to make suggestions, and to make sure he is not wasting his time on irrelevant or unimportant matters. Independent projects dealing with a single author, genre, or period may well be of great value to a superior student; but very often the student develops a pleasant illusion that he is doing better work than he actually is, simply because the teacher does not have the time to check what he is doing and show him where and how it could be improved. Much mediocre independent study is accepted and extravagantly praised just because the teacher is too busy to do anything else about it.

The notes assembled above do not prescribe a method for teaching English to talented students. My advice for teaching the talented would be: Use the same techniques that prove effective with all students, trying to keep all of them thinking on their own and as hard as they possibly can without experiencing the pain that might kill forever their interest in literature. I want to reiterate, however, my hunch that the technique most likely to succeed will involve a suppression of the urge to lecture.

One of the best pieces of teaching I ever witnessed was done by a teacher who had about fifteen pupils in an eighth-grade English class. She had chosen as the subject for their investigation the poem "Goosey, Goosey Gander":

> Goosey, goosey gander,
> Whither dost thou wander?
> Upstairs and downstairs
> And in my lady's chamber.
> There I met an old man
> Who would not say his prayers.
> I took him by the left leg
> And threw him down the stairs.

The first question the teacher asked was, "How many speakers are there in this poem?" The children said the poem to themselves again and came up with the observation that the poem was a dialogue: someone asks the goose a question and the rest of the poem is the goose's reply. Then the teacher asked, "How is this goose characterized? What kind of personality does he have?" A little girl named Mary said "flighty."

Now at this point the teacher did something much better than anything I would have done. She said, "All right, let's consider this word 'flighty' for a moment. Suppose I called Mary a flighty girl. What would I mean?"

As the class thought about the question, the teacher helped them with other questions. For example, she said, "Does it mean she is evil and sinful?" They said, "No, not exactly." Finally they agreed that if you called Mary "flighty" you meant she just wasn't very responsible, that she couldn't keep her mind on anything very long.

The teacher then asked if they thought "flighty" really described this goose. And they said, "No, that isn't the right word." The teacher suggested they try another word. So a boy said "religious." Again the teacher said, "Let's see what you mean by 'religious.' I assume you have a particular Christian religion in mind. What does it mean to be religious in a Christian sense? What does it mean to you?" In response to these questions the class gave their own version of the Golden Rule. As soon as they had established their definition of "religious," the teacher asked them if that was the trait the goose displayed. So they went back to the poem and agreed that wasn't the right word. Then the teacher said, "What is most noticeable about the behavior of the goose?" They gave in their own phraseology the equivalent of the statement that the punishment exceeded the crime. Throwing the old man down the stairs was a rather violent way to punish him for not saying his prayers. "Well," said the teacher, "what do you call someone who punishes more than you think is just?" Somebody said "bad-tempered," a term which accurately characterized the goose.

Now, if I had been the teacher and Mary had said "flighty," I probably would have said, "You don't mean 'flighty,' you mean 'bad-tempered,' don't you?" And she would have said "Yes." Instead the teacher gave a very fine example of how to teach in 30 minutes what she could have told them in 10 seconds. She made them reason about the meaning of one word, reason about the meaning of another word, and then arrive at a better term to characterize the goose.[5]

I don't know whether these eighth-grade students were a talented group, but I cannot see how the teacher could have used a better technique.

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[5] The preceding six paragraphs were published in the *Coker College Alumnae Magazine* 3: 4; Spring 1968, and are reprinted here by permission.

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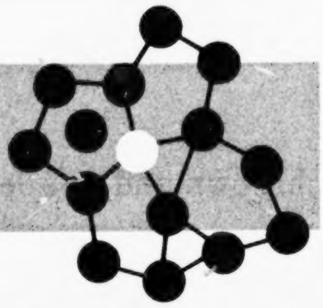


CHAPTER VII

One Possibility for Creative Class Experience

JOHN A. HART and ANN L. HAYES

WHEN WE ASK what creative activity in the classroom is, we are in part asking about mystery. Each of us knows that occasional classroom hours can stimulate thought in students, some of it highly original, some of it conventional enough but considerably advanced for individual students. We also know that a whole semester of classes can produce for one student or for a few students an awakening, a "turning on," which is extraordinary. Such phenomena are difficult to explain. They depend in part on personal qualities in the teacher. They depend also on capacity and readiness for creative thought in the student, the qualities we call academic talent and identify as the exceptional mind and imagination. What we can profitably explore here are conditions in our classes for the academically talented under which creative thought does sometimes emerge. We usually talk of classroom method as some combination of lecture, discussion, and independent study, each with certain accepted virtues and certain clear limitations. Lecture is conducive to clarity, solidity, and the amassing of information; it is also frequently suspect. Although contributing precise knowledge in a coherent way, it requires a passive role of the student. The strength of the discussion method depends, it is said, upon the degree and quality of participation by the student. In discussion he is drawn in; his thinking becomes active instead of passive; his contribution is a process of mental engagement in solving a question; he helps to advance the argument and in so doing he is creating; he is learning not only what to think but how to think. However slow his progress, knowledge is being gained by the student on his own and at a level which is profitable for him.

Some qualifications are attached, however. Not every discussion is profitable. It can't be just a bull session; it has to get somewhere. We conceive of some ideal condition in which discussion by the class moves, however slowly, always forward toward some goal of knowledge or idea which the student has never reached before. We conceive further, again ideally, of each class day after day building upon past classes, so that by the end of a month or a semester some enterprise of knowledge has been worked out by each student in his own way and fitted into the complex of ideas and knowledge he already has. Every teacher boggles at the claim that he has achieved any such teaching experience. Between the idea and the reality falls the shadow. Discussion is too wandering; minds are too unlike, too unequal, too little interested in the same thing.

As a corrective, teachers have devised a more rigorous form of discussion which they have come to call inductive teaching. The teacher, having the direction and perhaps even an end or solution in mind, proceeds to lead the class by question after question to follow a train of thought to a goal. In this way students are thinking a problem through in their own terms and have a better chance of commanding the material because they have worked it out themselves.

But the inductive method, however superior it may seem in theory, supplies its own risks and reveals many flaws in actual practice. One of them is the difficulty of working out a class period with a satisfactory direction and with appropriate questions for getting proper results. Not many teachers can work in this way very well or very long. A teacher is often tempted to reduce his goal to the simplest terms in order to make his class see the direction he wishes to go. A teacher is also tempted to regularize or formalize or multiply the questions to guarantee arrival at the predestined goal. The result is a class driven through a series of intentionally arranged questions which produce not inquiry but a guessing game:

"What does the teacher want this time?" But most of all, since the inductive method is artificially constructed, it is frequently self-defeating. Both student and teacher come to feel that going through the rigmarole of question and answer is time-consuming. Why not just present the argument and the solution to the students and move on to something more important? And that process results in the lecture method. Inductive teaching sounds better than it is.

Also worthy in its aim is the method called independent study. We want a student to be able to learn on his own, for his whole life ought to be a process of learning, of discovering and evaluating material, of judging and using it. The independence of the study, however, is sometimes deceptive, and the term becomes only a name because even brighter students may be unable to learn by themselves. Besides, some devices used for independent study prevent independent learning. A fairly recent idea has been to put various lectures or dramatic readings of plays on tape and make them available to the student when he chooses to listen. Such listening has usually been called at least part of an independent study program. Any real distinction between this process and attending a lecture in a classroom or watching a play is hard to perceive. There is no reason for such a program to lead the student to any more active participation in thought than the disparaged lecture method achieves. It may save teacher time, but that is another matter.

Despite their limitations, we know that these methods, no matter which are stressed, can evoke creative thought. We must look beyond method, then, for those conditions of the classroom most conducive to creative activity. With a slight shift of aim, we can add a dimension that modifies our estimate of these methods. Any teacher knows that he learns from his students. If he can modify that realization just slightly to think of the course he teaches as the education of Professor A along with the education of students B to Z, then it is quite possible to see any course as a joint learning process, one in which a student's own learning contributes to the teacher's fund of ideas and knowledge as well as to his fellow students', not accidentally, and not unacknowledged. Each student's stake in the educational process then is a real responsibility to the teacher and to his fellow students, and hence real to himself. He learns as his teacher learns—by teaching.

What is said here need not be limited to English at all. In fact, an innovation by the Department of Mechanical Engineering at Carnegie-Mellon University seems to apply. Their senior project has been the making of a model of some object, a model similar to those made by students in previous years. The intention of the project was to solve a problem, but the teaching staff had a fair idea in advance of what the solutions could be and a collection at the end of each year of what amounted to toys. For this rather automatic exercise, the plans are to substitute real problems. By this is meant problems whose solution is unknown to both teacher and student. The problems ask for suggestions which will be useful to both; in short, they contribute to the education of the teacher as well as the student.

What is needed for gifted students especially is a spirit of mutual inquiry. When that condition is added, the terms of our methods change. Mutual inquiry is difficult though not impossible to introduce into the lecture method. It is difficult because the lecture has about it an atmosphere of expert at work, apprentices attending. The student's only opportunity for contribution comes from his papers or exams. The possibility of teaching the teacher can arise only when the teacher in his lecture has proposed a line of inquiry which he thinks might be profitable but which he has not had time to work out or been able to think through completely; the imaginative, the challenged student may pick up that line of inquiry and work on it in a paper, contributing in a fashion quite satisfactory to his own growth and understanding. The limitations are that there is only one exchange, that it is probably not shared with the other students in the class, and that the student usually cannot anticipate aspects of the problem that the teacher, with his greater experience, might anticipate.

The discussion method offers greater opportunity for exchange. Here, the line of inquiry proposed by the teacher can be worked on by the students outside class through assignments or independent study (which after all is only unassigned work thought up by the student), and then the group of students with the teacher can jointly propose a solution to the problem. In this situation, induction may be said to operate meaningfully if discussion and questioning lead to an acceptable solution. The questions may come from the students (asked of each other or of the teacher) as often as they come from the teacher. Similarly, independent study may be performed by the student anywhere in this process, just as truly as in a one-to-one relationship with the teacher. In either case, the presence of a "real" problem—that is, a problem which is as much a problem for the teacher as for the student—will make the student's work meaningful and important to the group and to himself.

In the field of literature such "reality" is never hard to find, for it lies in any literary work which is just beyond our power of commanding in full. *Hamlet* is a ready instance. The teacher may have been over the text many times; he may know quite well the standard critical essays on the play and the usual sources attributed. The play, however, in any completely comprehensible form eludes him. His students may be reading it for the first time, but he knows that, in a different sense, so is he. His own reading tells him what the problems in the play are for him. He discusses them with the class as the play is read and as the difficulties become relevant to understanding it. And he attends to what the class has to say in reply. He will learn what they need to know, and he may learn from their questions and their insights what he himself needed to know. Learning together is not a pretense.

The subject of discussion is not what the teacher knows about *Hamlet*, but what there is to know. The problems may be large or small. It scarcely matters as long as the questions are real ones for everyone concerned. Why is Horatio the one who has information about Denmark's plans to rearm? Why is Horatio's presence at court seemingly not known by Hamlet in the two months since King Hamlet's death? Why is Horatio the person assigned by Gertrude to watch over Ophelia? Why is Horatio the person most trusted by Hamlet? Why does Horatio try to poison himself at the end of the play? Any student in the class, and the teacher, may work honestly and fully at an interpretation of character which will include all these questions. As issues, they are not as large as many in the play, but discussion of them can be a creative classroom experience of high order. The puzzle in the play is genuine. The student with reading skills, imagination, and originality can offer a major contribution here, one that will help him realize his own creative powers.

It is the teacher's job to propose questions and to listen to answers. In one way he is referee; in another he has to be the norm of good sense and perception. Perhaps he may rephrase and ask if he has understood. He may put several answers together. And he lets other people talk. All of this can be called a method; if it is used because it is a method, it may have some effect and be helpful. But it is better if it is recognized as continuing improvisation. The class finds out what it has not known with the help of someone who has been there before and who knows that he does not know. Any help is welcome. And every student is expected to help. What was said a long time ago is true: you can't teach anyone anything he doesn't already know. The classroom is an occasion for realizing what we know.

Both student and teacher need to be comfortable, at ease with each other and with their subject. The teacher needs to be versed in his field, knowledgeable, and well trained. He is then free to learn. He does not feel guilty when he does not know something; he is under no emotional pressure to pretend to know, and his own security will make it that much easier for his students to take pleasure in their knowledge and in adding to it. Students describing past teachers who have seemed to them especially good often remark on this point: the teacher told them when he did not know something; sometimes the teacher told them how to look further; sometimes the teacher himself looked further to find an answer or to find there was none. It was the honest approach they valued.

There is one further opportunity for creative class experience which we have not explored. That is the student's writing. Writing of any kind can and should bear the adjective "creative." But we give writing fiction and writing verse the special label "creative writing" because it is easiest to see creativity at work in those forms. Creative writing is popular with our classes, although explanation for that popularity is probably not in the forms themselves, since the demanding disciplines of fiction and of verse are not a casual but a lifetime commitment. But especially to the young, who do not yet have many other subjects, fiction and verse afford respectable means to take themselves as their subjects, to disguise themselves and play roles. If this is recognized, we are free to admit that most classroom creative writing is bad. We are seldom training those who will write as a profession. We are training those who will give up writing fiction and verse within a few years because what they write falls short of their own standards. But partly by trying it themselves they have developed those standards. Their initial interest is valuable to them as a means of increasing awareness, pleasure, and knowledge about language and what can be done with it. They have tried to write for the best reason: they want to. That condition is what is needed for every writing job; ways of fostering it are what we want to isolate for our present discussion.

The tendency of creative writing to direct a student toward his own mind is a disadvantage; much of the effort of his education is to free him of his preoccupation with himself and give him something else to think about. But he can use that interest and focus it outward. Any writer creates a self, a person speaking, with every word he puts down. If his attention is drawn to that speaking voice, he may begin to see that what fascinates him in creative writing is true whenever he writes: he is creating a relation between himself and someone else with every word, creating a view of himself in a medium that has its own peculiarities and gifts.

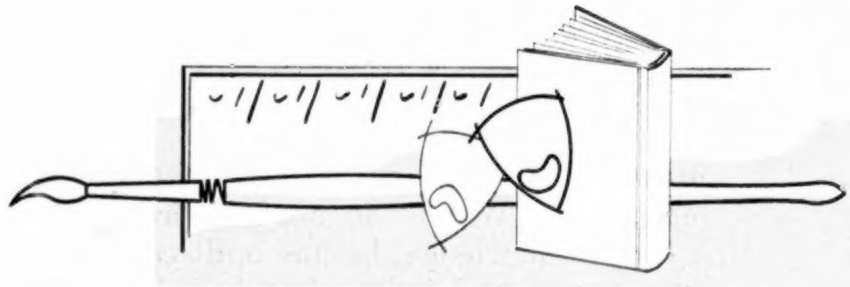
Realization that his words are for someone, for something, made of something can be encouraged and increased by class attitudes toward all the writing a student does. The relation with a reader can be acknowledged and used. If the instructor is the paper's only reader, the paper should be written accepting that fact and taking advantage of it. If the instructor is tacitly taking the place of some larger audience, he and the writer should understand and acknowledge the pretense, and then use it. If the class is the intended reader, then let the class read the paper. Publish it. Pin it up on a bulletin board. Ditto it and give it to the class and let them comment and reply. Or have the writer read it to them while they also read it, an instructive process because it shows quickly when a voice is being achieved and revealed and when it is absent. Or let the writer read his paper as he might present a lecture and find out from the discussion which follows how much he has conveyed and how completely he has been understood.

It is this insistence on the class as reader which helps make the class experience creative for the writer. The student in the privacy of his home has written his best and most effective style. The class and the teacher are affected and persuaded, or confused and affronted. At least they have questions, and the questions may lead the student to improve his skills of logic, or exposition, or description, or structure, or whatever. The creative experience is seen in this light to be a matter of exchange between minds and a clarification of any student's original thought.

Perhaps these are the essentials of creative work in the classroom: open sharing of mind and imagination brought to bear on a common subject. And the effect of this experience, especially for the gifted student, can and usually does lead to independent learning beyond the classroom. When the student has contributed to the group's knowledge, he has built confidence in his ability to perceive and judge. And he will continue the process whatever the subject of study.

But this occurs only when the conditions of the classroom experience are right: no one pretending, no one being suspicious, no one being fooled. If each generation has to provide form and meaning for itself, then each has to learn to recognize and delight in what has been done, and each has to have the courage to let go of what has been done in order to do for itself. Those skills and that courage are for free agents only. We practice free agency in the classroom, with the help of others. And we call what we are practicing art, skill, and fun.

CHAPTER VIII



The Role and Preparation of the Teacher

VIRGINIA A. ELLIOTT

IN THE post-Sputnik anxiety over America's progress in the space race, advanced and enriched programs for academically talented students proliferated in the schools. These courses in general succeeded academically and, what is more, achieved status in the community. Because of the prestige or the intellectual excitement they offered or both, students clamored to be admitted to them and parents urged their young people to apply.

Today, while programs for the able continue in most schools large enough for ability grouping, the emphasis is elsewhere. The problems created by racial unrest and urban deterioration have directed the chief attention of educators and the anxiety and interest of the public to the serious educational needs of the disadvantaged. Public funds flow chiefly into this new channel, and enthusiasm for the academically talented has lessened. In addition to competition for attention, a new problem has contributed to the lessening of public and academic regard for advanced programs: some have been found wanting. School administrators are expressing dissatisfaction, even disillusionment, with some of the social, psychological, and intellectual results of these programs. They complain of intellectual arrogance, superficiality in learning, and a prevalent cynicism among students as possibly the result of too much scholarship too early. Parents worry about the anxieties students develop from academic pressures such as heavy assignments and overly competitive situations. Able students themselves, unwilling to complicate further their already complex academic lives, frequently reject the opportunity to join an advanced group. Teachers are disturbed by problems arising from individual differences: how to evaluate the super-superior, whether to penalize the less superior, how to report achievement in a homogeneous group, and how to handle those differences in motivation, intellectual interest, personality, and type of ability which define themselves so much more clearly in segregated classes.

While these are problems serious enough to give pause to an administrator about to embark on a program for the especially able and to suggest the desirability of discontinuing special classes now in progress, they are not without solution. Since the teacher is the focal point in any learning situation, the careful selection and suitable training of teachers for the academically talented is crucial and could well lessen, even eradicate, most of the problems now plaguing such programs. As William K. Durr says, "In the final analysis . . . it is the classroom teacher who has the ultimate responsibility for organizing in-school learning experiences. The best efforts of counselors, school psychologists, administrators, and other school personnel will be of little avail if the classroom teacher cannot provide the most effective learning environment." [1]

What kind of person should the teacher of the academically talented in English be, and what training should he receive? Herbert J. Muller, in reporting the qualifications for every good English teacher as determined by the Dartmouth Seminar, says, ". . . the good English teacher . . . is a person of quite exceptional abilities—broader interests and finer, more diverse skills than are required of teachers of other major subjects. . . ." In describing the ideal English teacher for the academically talented, *The Identification and Education of the Academically Talented Student in the American Secondary School: The Conference Report* says:

> The teacher of the academically talented should have in exceptional degree some of the qualifications expected of all

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[1] Durr, William K. *The Gifted Student*. New York: Oxford University Press, 1964. p. 250.

[2] Muller, Herbert J. *The Uses of English*. New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967. p. 166.

> teachers: a good mind, broad intellectual curiosity, creativeness, energy, experience, enthusiasm, emotional balance, personality, and a deep interest in students. Further, the teacher of the academically talented in English should have social sensitivity and be sympathetic to the talented child.
>
> The teacher of the academically talented in all probability should himself be academically talented.[3]

In other words, he must be capable "in exceptional degree"—well beyond the requirements of the regular English classroom.

He must especially possess not only high intellectual ability but, as the *Conference Report* suggests, sympathy with the talented student, not mere tolerance but genuine understanding and appreciation of the divergent thinking and behavior that may accompany high ability and creativity. He must be secure enough to deal successfully with students' criticism of him, accepting disagreement with, even scorn for, his most cherished ideas and taking what Jacques Barzun calls (though he is speaking of a different problem) "the liberal stance": "The historic position of liberalism . . . gives freedom of opinion . . . and thereby licences . . . playing with ideas—debate and contradiction, the very opposite of that moralistic putting into Coventry which is the regular tactics of the educationist against criticism and heresy." [4] Elizabeth M. Eidletz, in an article on the creative student, says, "Prejudice against the mental nonconformist has been statistically confirmed. Studies of unconventional thinking in creative youngsters show that teachers greatly prefer a high-IQ group to a high-creativity group, even when the latter is equally superior to the total population as measured by standardized school achievement tests." [5] The teacher of the talented should feel no resentment or jealousy of his students' abilities and knowledge when they surpass his own, as they well may in certain students at various times. No teacher is likely to know everything about any phase of his subject; therefore he should be willing to grant recognition to greater knowledge or perception even in younger minds.

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[3] National Education Association. *The Identification and Education of the Academically Talented Student in the American Secondary School: The Conference Report*. Washington, D.C.: the Association, 1958. p. 95.

[4] Barzun, Jacques. *The House of Intellect*. New York: Harper & Row, 1959. p. 103.

[5] Eidletz, Elizabeth M. "Color Me Creative." *Independent School Bulletin* 27: 44; December 1967. *See also* Getzels, Jacob W., and Jackson, Philip W. *Creativity and Intelligence*. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1962. 293 pp.

In addition to such personal qualities, the academic background of the teacher of the academically talented in English should make him more than comfortable in all phases of his subject and no stranger in the sciences and the humanities in general. He should know something of music and art, and his knowledge of science should reinforce his understanding of literature. George H. Henry, in discussing the preparation of every English teacher, says:

> How can an English teacher-to-be understand Euripides without Heraclitus, Plato without Pythagoras, Shakespeare without the medieval cosmology, Milton on the brink of Galileo, Kepler, Newton; the physiocrats and the Age of Reason, Darwin and the Victorians, the new nominalism of science and ethical relativism in our novels, Freud and the decline of rational motivation in character analysis, Marx and the sociology of values, anthropology and language as in Sapir and Whorf? Without these, the fledgling English major looks to be out of touch with the deepest currents of past centuries, out of intellectual rapport with the youth before him. . . .[6]

In his own subject, the teacher of the academically talented in English should be close to expert, at least in many phases of it. In literature, his knowledge and understanding must indeed be exceptional. Able students, their initiative driving them to satisfy their intellectual curiosity, are likely to bring to class a far-ranging experience with literature, criticism, and philosophy. While it is not to be expected that any teacher can match the reading of all his students book for book, he must be able to take advantage of their backgrounds for the enrichment of the class; and because able students can read more mature works and enjoy thinking more abstractly and critically, he must be able to extend and deepen their already perceptive experience with literature, drawing into the discussion of a literary work other works for enlightening comparison. And if the teacher takes advantage of able students' ability to study independently and in small research groups, he must be able to handle many operations at once: to compose individual reading lists, continually feed suggestions, judge progress, and advance each reader from the point where he is toward further insights and literary experience.

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[6] Henry, George H. "A Way of Preparing an English Teacher." *The Changing Role of English Education.* (Edited by Stanley B. Kegler.) Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1965. p. 51.

How should his training in literature differ from the training of the teacher in the average classroom? Perhaps it need differ only in depth. The teacher of the academically talented in English, if he is to be successful, must have an even fuller and more varied experience with literature during his undergraduate years and should develop into a reader of unusual perception.

While a prescribed program of studies would be impractical here, a discussion of desirable competencies will surely have meaning. The Illinois State-Wide Curriculum Study Center in the Preparation of Secondary School English Teachers has prepared for its own purposes lists of "minimal," "good," and "superior" qualifications for teachers of English in general, the "superior" category assuming the presence of all qualifications in the other two listings.[7] Since the teacher of the academically talented ought certainly to be a superior teacher (says Jacques Barzun, "the exceptionally intelligent have the highest claim on a good teacher, as being rare and valuable"[8]), in fact, must be superior to succeed, ISCPET's list of competencies required for the "superior" level in literature will suggest the kind of training a teacher of the academically talented should have. The list suggests that the merely "good" teacher should be familiar with "the important works of major English and American authors" and should know "the characteristics of various genres and of major works in English and

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[7] Hook, J. N. "Qualifications of Secondary School Teachers of English: A Preliminary Statement." *College English* 27: 166-69; November 1965.

[8] Barzun, Jacques, *op. cit.*, p. 104 n.

American literature in the genres"; should have knowledge of "the Bible, mythology, and folklore"; should be able to read closely "an unfamiliar literary text of above-average difficulty with good comprehension of its content and literary characteristics." The "superior" teacher, in addition, should have "intensive and extensive knowledge of one or more major authors and of at least one genre, and one period; knowledge of major works of selected foreign writers, both ancient and modern, and of comparative literature"; and "familiarity with major critical theories and schools of criticism." [9]

The slogan for National Library Week in 1968 was "Be All You Can—Read." For academically talented students in English to be all they can, they need a full encounter with literature: with the interpretations of life it can offer which extend the imagination and enlarge the vision; with the order it creates from the miscellany of daily experience; with its criticism of man and his world; and with the values it suggests to guide and support him. Reading should become, McLuhan to the contrary, a large and active part of their lives, an important way to greater understanding, and inspiration to innovative thought.

To achieve this full encounter, they need the habit not only of reading but of reading fully, with awareness of the voice speaking in a work and the relationship it establishes with the audience, of a work's order against other possible orders—noting, in short, as *Freedom and Discipline* puts it, "the rhetorical and structural means by which literature achieves its ends." [10]

They need as teacher, then, a master reader who is both a generalist in literature and a specialist in certain phases of it, and who brings to his class, besides, much experience with close textual analysis. Such a teacher should be capable of directing able students in literary explorations which they initiate and also of pointing their reading and thinking in new directions.

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[9] Hook, J. N., *op. cit.*, p. 168.

[10] College Entrance Examination Board. *Freedom and Discipline in English.* Report of the Commission on English. New York: the Board, 1965. p. 53.

In composition, too, the teacher of the academically talented must be capable to an exceptional degree. He must be thoroughly familiar with the problems of all types of writing, both discursive and creative; his students, who may already write maturely, will need skilled help in developing still further proficiency. His experience in writing should include not only courses in advanced composition but even serious efforts at publication so that he can supplement soundly planned classroom teaching with expert and sympathetic criticism, for probably the largest portion of composition teaching takes place beyond the classroom, in conference or in comment on papers. In conferences, where students should be asked to justify their choices in the problem sections of their writing, and in comments on student papers, the teacher must perceive solutions and lead the student to perceive them through new views of the subject, the order, or the style. He must note also the successes of a paper, often a more difficult perception, so that the writer moves to his next effort with a positive feeling of achievement as well as a recognition of his need to improve.

The teacher of the academically talented should be able to develop in his students a sense of responsibility both for clear, honest, appropriate expression without the flights of rhetoric their facility in language sometimes leads to and for the logical order and mechanical correctness which their love of independence and tendency toward divergence sometimes causes them to suspect as unoriginal and fettering. As the authors of *Freedom and Discipline* point out, all students must "understand that more is necessary than invention and style. The order in professional writing, even that which seems most informal, is seldom the result of a flash of inspiration; after inspiration, if not with it, must come a conscious exercise of control." [11]

This exercise of control, the student should also understand, is not essential to discursive writing alone but is equally essential in narrative and poetry. In creative writing the student tends to trust his inspiration, to reject control as the despoiler of his vision. He needs to learn the craft of his art. Since many academically talented students are also vitally creative, a portion of their composition program should be devoted to the direction and encouragement of this talent. They need a well-trained, experienced writer-teacher capable of guiding even those occasional students among them already producing the astonishingly successful poem or story as well as the great number eager to try their talents. While encouraging originality, he must be able to make students aware that many of the problems of discursive writing are the problems of creative writing also, and that technique, if it is ever to be something apart from control, must be dependent on it.

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[11] *Ibid.*, p. 104.

As for knowledge of the English language, a knowledge basic to the subject English, the teacher of the academically talented, like all English teachers, should thoroughly understood its nature, history, and current approaches to its study. Northrop Frye says, "English means, in the first place, the mother tongue. As that, it's the most practical subject in the world. You can't understand anything or take any part in your society without it." [12] And *Freedom and Discipline* comments, "the teaching of [the arts of reading and writing] must be built upon the pupil's competence in speaking and understanding his language." [13] The teacher of bright students, sensitive to language from his thorough study of it, should be able to keep them continually aware of the relation of language to experience, including the experience they are trying to control through writing it and their experience through language with literature. Because of such students' high verbal ability, this training can multiply meanings for them. The ISCEPT lists these competencies in language as necessary for the "good" teacher: "A detailed understanding of how language functions, including knowledge of the principles of semantics"; "a detailed knowledge of at least two systems of English grammar"; "a thorough knowledge of levels of usage; some knowledge of dialectology, a realization of the cultural implications of both"; "a knowledge of the history of the English language, with appropriate awareness of its phonological, morphological, and syntactic changes." For the "superior" teacher, it adds: "Sufficient knowledge to illustrate richly and specifically the areas listed under 'good.' "

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[12] Frye, Northrop. *The Educated Imagination.* Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1964. pp. 14-15.

[13] College Entrance Examination Board, *op. cit.*, p. 18.

As competencies required for the "good" teacher of speech, the ISCPET lists: "An understanding of the principles of group discussion, group dynamics, oral reporting, panel discussions, classroom dramatizations, and choral reading; an understanding of the relationships between speaking and other facets of English"; "a knowledge of current information relative to listening techniques"; "an ability to speak clearly and effectively, and in conformity with present standards of educated usage"; "an ability to read aloud well enough to convey most aspects of the interpretive art—meaning, mood, dominant emotions, varying emotions, overtones, and variety." In addition, the "superior" teacher should possess "touches of expertise and showmanship that a professional speaker, oral interpreter, or actor possesses." [14] Since the teacher of the academically talented has an audience with an appreciative ear for language well used and well read, along with the frequently critical attitude of perfectionists toward the speech of the classroom and, paradoxically, marked mimetic propensities, his need to speak and read well surpasses that of the teacher of an average class. In addition, any teacher following the lead of the Dartmouth Seminar in its emphasis on dramatic activities in the English classroom will find advantageous all possible dramatic training.

Even with superior training, the teacher of the academically talented must never consider his education completed. He may wish to strengthen his background through graduate courses in modern writers and modern philosophy, in periods, authors, works which he has not previously studied or which he finds offered in a new perspective. "Yeats' Poetry: The Search for Unity," "The Novel and Techniques of Persuasion," "The Portrayal of Negroes in American Literature," "Revolution and Reform in American Fiction," "The Ancient Novel" (satire and romantic prose fiction of Petronius, Longus, Apuleius, and others)—these offerings from the 1968 Bulletin of the Bread Loaf School of English suggest the kind of courses likely to be profitable. In choosing his courses, the teacher should consider not only the content but also the method. He should avoid lecture courses, the lecture being least helpful in his own classroom, and participate as often as possible in discussions and seminars in order to understand from the participant's point of view the values and problems of such teaching methods and to make his own use of them more vital and productive.

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[14] Hook, J. N., *op. cit.*, p. 168.

In addition to graduate work, other types of special training are available to him. Occasional NDEA Institutes designed for teachers of the academically talented are offered from time to time.[15] Forward-looking schools will provide in-service sessions on the problems of the homogeneous class, inviting speakers from local colleges and universities or specialists from city, county, or state departments of instruction; or they will arrange panel discussions for the teachers of several schools, giving them the opportunity to work in small groups on the problems of teaching the academically talented. Whatever the training of the teacher of the academically talented in English, it should emphasize certain skills and awarenesses particularly important in teaching English to able students: skill in the advantageous use of students' verbal facility; awareness of the degree of scholarliness profitable to a class; alertness to incipient intellectual arrogance along with the skill to prevent its development; awareness of social and academic forces creating a competitive atmosphere; and skill in maintaining a healthy level of competition.

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[15] In 1967 NDEA Institutes for teachers of Advanced Placement and honors courses were available at Purdue University and California State College at Fullerton; in 1968 such Institutes were available at Carnegie-Mellon University, Drake University, and Purdue University.

While the lecture occasionally has its place in the teaching of English to the able, such students, infinitely more verbal than most others, prefer to do the talking. The subtly conducted discussion, where the teacher only guides and elicits ideas yet shapes their flow, does not teach as quickly as a lecture, but more efficiently, because students' involvement results in that deeper, more memorable learning which comes with making the connections for oneself. As guide, the teacher must see that the discussion moves back and forth from general to specific and achieves depth as well as breadth. He must know how to probe, to ask the provocative question, to juxtapose ideas for comparison, drawing the group along, point after point, resisting the temptation to do the talking himself, and making the most of insights in student responses.

The teacher of these students will of course include in his plan the points the lesson is to bring to light, but the list should become no more than a check to determine that in the free flow of student question and comment all important matters have been sufficiently considered. What questions he does ask, perhaps to warm up discussion at the beginning of a period, should require generalization, analysis, or evaluation. His question should not be "What was Pip's reaction to London upon his first arrival?"—which requires only a summary of Dickens' paragraph on the subject—but "How did Pip's first impression of London contrast with his expectation?"—which demands a before-and-after contrast, a generalization relating a part to a part. The question to follow might range further: "What is the relation of this contrast to the theme of the book?"—which again requires generalization, the relating of parts to the whole. Or his question should not be "What lies does Huck tell?" or even the simple analytical "When does Huck lie to protect Jim?" but a narrower evaluative one requiring the student to think beyond factual identification to deeper analysis and generalization: "How do Huck's invented families contrast in moral purpose with the lies of the Duke and the Dauphin?" The discussion might then widen to deception as the theme of the book. Such questions inductively establish important ideas about a work. *Freedom and Discipline* says, "the teacher as critic asks questions, primarily because criticism is a process of asking questions and attempting to answer them." [16]

A still more valuable kind of discussion for advanced students, which forgoes the teacher's selection and organization of the ideas to be considered, arises from student-initiated comment, when a class trained in close textual analysis discovers for itself, with the lightest of teacher guidance, those ideas and questions central to a piece of literature. A discussion of *Prometheus Bound* might open with a student's expression of amazement that so long before the time of Christ a Christ-like image was created. Student questions and comments might follow about Prometheus' motivation, the value of the primitive mankind he sacrificed himself for, his obligation to Zeus, the underlying reasons for Zeus's great anger, and the justice of the punishment Zeus imposed upon Prometheus. Students should see their questions about *Prometheus Bound* as ultimately, at least in part, questions about power, about the need for justice to be tempered with mercy, and about the obligation of the governed to government, questions of prime relevance today. "Question-asking is the process students must learn, becoming critics themselves as they become increasingly adept at asking their own questions and at testing their answers. And gradually they must learn also to ask what kind of questions they are asking, what kinds of answers they are seeking." [17]

Even when the teacher of an able group has schooled himself not to be the chief speaker in the class, another temptation awaits him: the over-scholarly approach, a temptation growing out of the teacher's love of learning and the great ability of his students. Widely read, committed to the values of literature, perhaps even learned in the phases of it he teaches, he may let his enthusiasm carry him into abstruse realms at the sacrifice of basics.

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[16] College Entrance Examination Board, *op. cit.*, p. 55.

[17] *Ibid.*

Or in an effort to teach *all* about a work of literature, he may insist upon too much close work with the text, leading students through footnote-like discussions of diction in Chaucer or Shakespeare. For the lower grades of high school he may choose texts written for the upper years of college, presenting literature beyond the emotional or intellectual level of his students, with boredom and rejection the result.

Where the over-scholarly approach is the teacher's reaction to the homogeneous class of able students, the students' reaction is frequently intellectual arrogance, an attitude nurtured by teachers, administrators, and parents who emphasize to students the prestige of the advanced group. Parents with young people in both advanced and regular groups soon learn to play down distinctions. Administrators and teachers should treat able groups casually, the teacher regarding his class as a responsibility rather than a mark of honor and leading students to regard it the same way. There should be no fanfare in the school to suggest anything special about such groups, no hint of prestige for teachers or students. Since in a great number of schools today students in an advanced class in one subject are likely to be in regular classes in others, the able student in English should recognize his lesser ability in, perhaps, math or science. Within the English classroom itself, students can be made aware of differences in their talents, some of them being more gifted in writing poetry than others, some more skilled in speech or criticism, so that a class judiciously handled may lean toward humility and respect for the achievements of others rather than arrogance. In the class and out, the competitive attitude which nurtures arrogance should be discouraged. Independent study and small research groups can help to break down an overly competitive classroom situation; and encouragement of a true respect for learning as opposed to emphasis on grades, rank, and the number of advanced courses a student is enrolled in can help students toward sounder educational values.

Diminishing the competitive classroom situation serves to diminish not only arrogance but also the pressures of which students and parents complain. These pressures can be further reduced if the teacher considers the value and demands of every assignment. While James Conant could say in 1959, "In all but a few schools I have visited, the majority of bright boys and girls were not working hard enough."[18] today the tendency is to overload them. Feeling the pressure of College Entrance or Advanced Placement Examinations or mistakenly believing that able students learn more from more work, many teachers give heavy reading and writing assignments. Sometimes students overload themselves by enrolling in a greater number of advanced courses than they can handle with ease. In either case, students are likely to work too hastily, less thoughtfully, to skim where they should read thoroughly, to neglect revision of written work.

Grades, of course, are responsible for much of the pressure students feel. They should be used only where required and mentioned only when asked for. Grades for themes can be recorded in the teacher's record book and made available upon the student's request without appearing on papers if comment is full and specific. Still another source of academic pressure in the homogeneous classroom is the teacher's tendency to evaluate using the pattern of the normal curve. The curve, whatever its logic in other classes, in such a group becomes illogical. Yet consciously or unconsciously, teachers accustomed to it apply it in groups of talented students. If such students have been chosen with care, they should do *A* or *B* work, so that ranking them, even as a way of thinking about them, is unproductive. Worse yet, it may lead the teacher to unintentional encouragement of competition.

If the academically talented student yields to current academic pressures, they will deter development of his interests and skills not related to school. His only recourse is to refuse the opportunity to join advanced groups or, if enrolled in one or two, to become an underachiever. The teacher whose assignments are provocative rather than lengthy can make the way of life in an advanced class viable for his students.

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[18] Conant, James B. *The American High School Today*. New York: McGraw-Hill Book Co., 1959. p. 23.

The bright student in the heterogeneous group may escape the problem of pressure. For him, the problem is finding a challange. The teacher of the heterogeneous group must be adept at planning with his bright students, working out with them ways to participate profitably in class as well as individual reading and study programs which will help them to a fuller understanding of literature and language. Before each unit he may plan with them special reading or research, some of which he may ask them to present to the class. In conferring about a coming study of *The Red Badge of Courage,* he may find one student interested in investigating Crane's debt to the French Impressionists; another, Crane's place in American literature as a realist; another, the influence of Crane on Hemingway, using Hemingway's own statements of his debt to Crane and comparing Hemingway's method in a novel or a story with Crane's in *The Red Badge* or other works. Some of these studies might be presented to the rest of the class and even extended beyond one unit to a term's work.

In composition the teacher should be skillful in devising stimulating assignments for the especially able and offering helpful comments which will develop their perception and intellectual power as well as strengthen their ability as writers. Whatever other activities the class may be engaged in under the name "composition," the bright students should spend their time writing. They may not need assignments different from the group's, but they should be held more strictly accountable for mechanics, clarity, and full development of ideas. Short conferences with the teacher rather than drills are often sufficient to help them learn to correct the flaws in their papers. While the rest of the class reviews or drills, small groups of able students might discuss each other's papers; or they might work out the chief problems in a set of class themes and as a team teach a lesson to remedy them.

These ways of working in and with the class, but beyond it, can be supplemented by separating the bright students from the class now and then for independent study or small-group research not necessarily related to the work of the class. Investigation of an author, mode, or movement—Browning or satire or Romanticism—might culminate in a long paper or several short ones on suitably narrow subjects. Or it might result simply in wide reading brought into focus through conferences with the teacher and perhaps reports to the class at appropriate points in their study.

Here, as in the special class, the teacher should take care not to overemphasize the superior abilities of especially able students and should make their contributions to the class merely another part of the hour's work. Whatever their talents as leaders, it would also be well to guard against giving them positions of leadership too often, even in small groups.

Whether the teacher of academically talented students meets them in heterogeneous or homogeneous groups does not affect the weight of the responsibility he bears to keep them moving forward in learning. As "a creative scholar," to borrow J. Douglas Brown's term for the ideal college teacher, he must provide "a flow of new ideas, drawing upon deep resources of accumulated knowledge." [19] Through his own intellectual vigor he must develop theirs, holding them to precision and thoroughness where desirable and opening the way for them to the exploration of ideas, through which they may find themselves often and often "Silent, upon a peak in Darien."

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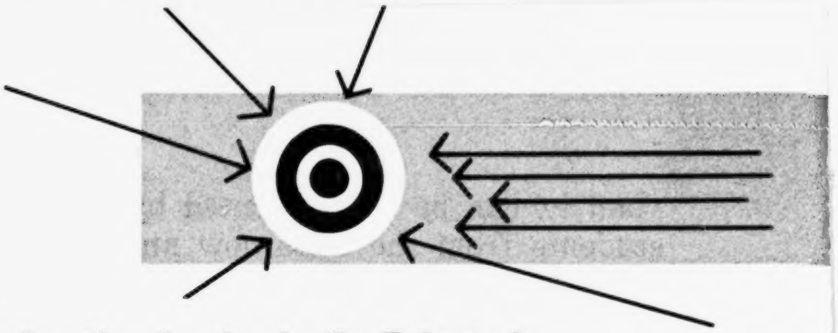
[19] Brown, J. Douglas. "The Development of Creative Teacher-Scholars." *Daedalus* 94: 615; Summer 1965.

CHAPTER IX



New Programs for the Academically Talented

LOIS M. GROSE

In EDUCATION, as in other aspects of our civilization, the pendulum swings from one extreme to the other. Provision for the academically talented has not been immune to this rhythmic process. The twenties saw a major focus on education for the gifted, stimulated by the research of Terman, Hollingworth, and Witty. In the thirties, however, the pendulum swung in the opposite direction as the public came to feel that the segregation of the gifted was undemocratic.

The fifties brought in another period of intense concern for students of superior ability. The advent of Sputnik probably did more than any other single event to arouse the American people to the need for a more challenging educational program, particularly for the able students who should be leaders in the scientific and cultural progress of the future. In a decade phenomenal advances were made in the quality of education in elementary and secondary schools. This was the era of breakthroughs in the organization of subject matter in most disciplines: the SMSG math, the chemical bond approach in chemistry, the aural-oral approach in foreign languages, structural and later generative-transformational grammar in English. Most of these approaches were developed by outstanding scholars in their disciplines; most of them proved very successful in stimulating the thinking of young people of superior ability.

In the sixties, however, certain factors have caused the pendulum to swing again. The principal factor has been a long overdue concern for improving the education of the youth whom we currently call "disadvantaged," particularly those in inner-city schools. Though the need for this focus certainly existed 10 years earlier, *The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English,* drawn up by a group of leaders in the profession in 1958, included no mention of this problem.[1] But parental protests, demonstrations, and finally riots have forced an examination of the quality of education provided in inner-city schools. The intense concentration on this need has, to a certain extent, crowded out the concern for the needs of the academically talented; indeed, in some cases the demands of spokesmen for the disadvantaged have destroyed programs which provided for the gifted through homogeneous grouping. The four-track curriculum set up in the public schools of Washington, D.C., following their desegregation was declared unconstitutional by Federal Judge J. Skelly Wright on the ground that the system was based on aptitude tests geared to white, middle-class standards and therefore worked against disadvantaged students. This decision had repercussions: the resignation of Superintendent Carl F. Hansen, the abandonment of the four-track system in the Washington schools, and a gradual discarding of track programs in other big cities.

Another factor which has affected the present swing of the pendulum in regard to English programs for the academically talented is the current emphasis on human relations as a primary concern in education. This concern manifested itself in the very significant Dartmouth Seminar of 1966. One of the points of agreement reached at this conference was "the need to overcome the restrictiveness of rigid patterns of 'grouping' or 'streaming' which limit the linguistic environment in which boys and girls learn English and which tend to inhibit language development." Another point of agreement concerned "the wisdom of providing young people at all levels with significant opportunities for the creative uses of language —creative dramatics, imaginative writing, improvisation, role playing, and similar activities."[2] Such emphases seem to reverse the direction of the many current subject-matter-centered curriculums for able students. Recent publications reporting the recommendations of the Seminar or strongly influenced by them approach teaching chiefly through students' creative activity.[3]

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[1] National Council of Teachers of English. *The Basic Issues in the Teaching of English.* Champaign, Ill.: the Council, 1959. p. 6.

[2] NCTE publicity release, September 26, 1966. pp. 2, 3.

Though it must be acknowledged, then, that more attention is being directed at the present time to the education of students of lesser ability and achievement than to that of the academically talented, this fact does not mean an abandonment of interest in the latter group. Many types of programs already established have proved so successful that they are being continued and expanded. In addition, the ungraded programs and plans for the individualization of instruction currently being developed are providing challenging educational opportunities of a new type for the able student.

One of the most successful programs established in the fifties has been the Advanced Placement program, which sets up college-level courses in high school and makes it possible for graduates from such courses to be admitted into college with credit for those courses, advanced standing, or both. The growth of this program has been phenomenal. In 1955-56, 1,229 students from 104 schools took the examination; 10 years later, in 1965-66, 38,178 students from 2,518 schools took the examination. In English alone, 14,035 students took the examination in 1965, 114 percent more than in 1962.

The committee of examiners says that the purpose of an Advanced Placement course in English

> Is to teach the intelligent, mature student how to read works of literature and how to express himself about them. The advanced placement student sees the historical context and the author's life as background for his understanding of a work of literature. His focus is upon the work itself: its charac-

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[3] Dixon, John. *Growth Through English.* Reading, England: National Association for the Teaching of English, 1967; Barnes, Douglas, editor. *Drama in the English Classroom.* Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968; Muller, Herbert J. *The Uses of English.* New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1967; Summerfield, Geoffrey, editor. *Creativity in English.* Champaign, Ill.: National Council of Teachers of English, 1968; Moffett, James. *A Student-Centered Curriculum, Grades K-13: A Handbook for Teachers.* Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1968.

ters, action, themes, structure; its tone and mood; its use of literal and figurative language. Only after he has formulated some of his own responses to a work of literature and discussed them with his colleagues and his teacher does he read secondary sources.[4]

The list of works and writers suggested as being appropriate for reading in Advanced Placement English includes the following works:

- Drama
  - Tragedy
    - Shakespeare, *Hamlet, Macbeth*
    - Synge, *Riders to the Sea*
    - O'Neill, *Emperor Jones, Desire Under the Elms*
    - Miller, *Death of a Salesman, A View from the Bridge*
    - Williams, *A Streetcar Named Desire*
  - Comedy
    - Shakespeare, *A Midsummer Night's Dream*
    - Jonson, *Volpone*
    - Congreve, *The Way of the World*
    - Goldsmith, *She Stoops To Conquer*
    - Sheridan, *The School for Scandal*
    - Wilde, *The Importance of Being Earnest*
    - Shaw, *Major Barbara, The Devil's Disciple*
- History
  - Shakespeare, *Henry IV, Part I*
  - Shaw, *St. Joan*
- Novel
  - Fielding, *Joseph Andrews*
  - Austen, *Pride and Prejudice, Emma*
  - Hawthorne, *The Scarlet Letter*
  - Thackeray, *Vanity Fair*
  - Dickens, *Great Expectations*
  - Brontë, *Wuthering Heights*
  - Melville, *Billy Budd*
  - Eliot, *Adam Bede*
  - Twain, *Huckleberry Finn*
  - Hardy, *Tess of the D'Urbervilles, The Mayor of Casterbridge*
  - James, *Washington Square*

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[4] College Entrance Examination Board. *Advanced Placement Program: 1966-68 Course Descriptions*. New York: the Board, 1966. p. 73.

Conrad, *Victory, Lord Jim*
Joyce, *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*
Fitzgerald, *The Great Gatsby*
Faulkner, *The Bear, Light in August*
Hemingway, *The Sun Also Rises, A Farewell to Arms*
Warren, *All the King's Men*

The yearly Advanced Placement examination is in essay form. Questions may call for the analysis of a given selection in poetry or prose or may ask the student to write an essay on a given statement drawing examples from his own reading. One of the questions cited as typical is the following:

> In many novels and plays, minor characters contribute significantly to the total work. They often have particular functions, e.g., as instruments in the plot, foils to the main character, commentators on the action and theme, and the like. Write a well-organized essay showing how three minor characters function in the works in which they appear. Select the characters from two or three works (novels or plays). You must use works by one or more of the following authors:
>
> Jane Austen
> Joseph Conrad
> Charles Dickens
> George Eliot
> William Faulkner
> F. Scott Fitzgerald
> Thomas Hardy
> Nathaniel Hawthorne
> Ernest Hemingway
> Henry James
> Herman Melville
> Eugene O'Neill
> William Shakespeare
> George Bernard Shaw
> Richard Brinsley Sheridan
> Mark Twain[5]

Acceptance of the Advanced Placement program by colleges varies. Such institutions as Harvard and the University of Michigan give advanced standing and credit to students scoring 3, 4, or 5 on the Advanced Placement examination. Other institutions give advanced standing on a probationary basis; still others give their own examinations to determine placement or require Advanced Placement students, regardless of grades, to take basic college composition and literature courses.

Probably the most common provision for the academically talented is honors courses. Such courses are planned in three-, four-, or six-year sequences, though some, such as the course in language arts for superior and gifted students in Baltimore County, Maryland, are for grades 1 through 12. In most honors courses the organization is thematic, though for certain years or units genre may be the organizing principle. The literature studied in most honors courses is challenging; writing is consistently the exposition of literature. Such school systems as those in Cleveland, Houston, Seattle, and Milwaukee and many private schools have well-established programs of this type.

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[5] *Ibid.*, pp. 79-80.

One of the plans in urban education for the academically talented which has continued and expanded during the present decade is the establishment of honors classes in certain designated school centers rather than in all schools. The Major Work classes in Cleveland were an early example of this type of program. A recent example is the Scholars Program set up in Pittsburgh as a result of a survey and recommendations made in 1959-60 by Alan Blackmer, visiting consultant on leave from Phillips Academy, Andover. Dr. Blackmer in his recommendations stated,

> What seems to be needed are subjects which have *generative* power, matters which, once learned and understood, enable the learning of other new things, a foundation on which to erect an intellectual structure. Students of the future will need basic techniques for investigating anything. They will surely need flexibility of mind, a training of the imagination to look at problems from new angles, to see new relationships. Instead of massive accumulation of facts, they may most need key concepts and ideas. . . . As for the specific content of this education, it surely must equip students with the basic skills on which all further learning rests—the ability to read intelligently and to write effectively, to listen sensitively and to speak clearly, the ability to reason mathematically, and competence in some language other than the mother tongue.
>
> A final goal of this education would be to transmit the attitudes and habits of mind of educated people; how to reason and to think critically, objectively, fairly; with good taste; and a sensitivity to beauty and to spiritual values.

> All this adds up to a sound liberal education . . . an education constantly adapted to new times and reinvigorated with new knowledge and new methods of teaching.[6]

Some features of the Scholars Program set up as a result of these recommendations are as follows:

1. The top 15 to 20 percent of pupils in Pittsburgh are invited to transfer, if necessary, to schools designated as centers for the Scholars Program. Fifteen eighth-grade centers have been established with seven centers for grades 9 through 12.
2. Students selected follow a rigorous program of study in six disciplines: English, social studies, mathematics, science, foreign languages, and the arts.
3. Regular class sessions are scheduled for only four days a week; the fifth day is devoted to independent study.
4. Sequences which are terminated after three years (foreign language, math) are maintained thereafter by one class session per week.
5. Teachers who instruct in this program receive special training in in-service workshops.

The English course in the Scholars Program begins in the eighth grade with the consideration of literature as self-revelation (study of poetry, essays, and the total work of a single writer), followed by a study of the objective presentation of a single theme in literature (poems of Frost and Sandburg, *Animal Farm, Judgment at Nuremberg, A Raisin in the Sun, Profiles in Courage).* This year's work aims also to develop a realization of the importance of visual perception as a means to learning. In the ninth grade, students become acquainted with different genres as they read *Great Expectations, Great Short Stories, Madame Curie,* and two Shakespearean comedies and study a unit in mythology. The literature in the tenth grade finds its thematic focus in answering the question "What is man?" Units include man as he perceives (*The Sea Around Us, A Child's Christmas in Wales, The Old Man and the Sea*); man as he feels (*Romeo and Juliet, West Side Story, Nectar in a Sieve, Cry*

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[6] "File of Work Papers of Alan R. Blackmer, Consultant to the Pittsburgh Public Schools, 1960-61." Pittsburgh: the Public Schools, 1961. pp. 84, 85, 86. (Mimeo.)

the Beloved Country, Cradle Song); man as he thinks (*Darkness at Noon, Billy Budd, The Miser, A Separate Peace, My Fair Lady*); man as he wills (*All Quiet on the Western Front, An Enemy of the People, Dialogues of Plato, Dr. Faustus, Idylls of the King*); and the whole man (*Marty, Julius Caesar, A Man for All Seasons*).

In the eleventh grade the Scholars classes center attention on various aspects of the American character as reflected in literature: the Puritan spirit (*The Scarlet Letter, The Crucible, Ethan Frome*); the desire for success (Franklin's *Autobiography, The Great Gatsby, The Rise of Silas Lapham, The Death of a Salesman*); the spirit of optimism and idealism (*Walden,* "Self-Reliance" and other writings of the transcendentalists, "Renascence," *O Pioneers, Our Town*); the darker Romanticism (short stories and poetry of Poe, "Turn of the Screw," *Moby Dick, Emperor Jones,* "Wash"); the spirit of realism (*Street Scene, The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, The Red Badge of Courage*). The twelfth grade includes much of the content of the already-established Advanced Placement program which will be organized around the following themes: the hero and the alienated, compassion and indignation, appearance and reality. Expository writing based on the literature studied is a major concern of the Scholars Program; some opportunities for imaginative writing are offered, however. Language study focuses on the principal concepts of language structure as developed by linguists in the last few decades.

Within recent years a growing interest in the humanities has resulted in the establishment of humanities courses in a wide variety of patterns. Some are interdisciplinary, planned and presented with a team teaching approach; others are part of the English or social studies curriculum. Humanities conferences in 1967 and 1968 organized their programs around the great ideas, culture epoch, American studies, and aesthetics approaches. Such courses provide a widening of cultural horizons for able students and are often scheduled only for those in the upper levels of intellectual ability.

Such a course is the four-year sequence offered in the

Housatonic Valley Regional High School, Falls Village, Connecticut. Eighth-grade students who qualify on the basis of objective testing for honors classes in either English or social studies are candidates for the humanities. Humanities 1 includes Western history up to the Renaissance, with students reading parts of the Old and New Testaments, classical mythology, the *Odyssey*, the *Oresteia*, *Julius Caesar*, the *Morte d'Arthur*, and *The Merchant of Venice*. Music activities include lectures and listening experiences in primitive, Greek, and medieval music; basic principles of visual expression and design make up the art segment of the course. Humanities 2 begins with the Renaissance and goes to the beginning of the twentieth century, with classes reading *Don Quixote*, *The Tempest*, *Paradise Lost*, *The Pilgrim's Progress*, *Phaedra*, *The Marriage of Figaro*, *Faust* (Part 1), selections from Romantic poetry, *Pride and Prejudice*, *Hard Times*, *Great Expectations*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *A Doll's House*. Music experiences are focused on the Renaissance and Romantic periods; art, on the painting of the Romantic period. Humanities 3 is a study of American culture, while the fourth year of the sequence is Advanced Placement English.

One of the points on which conferees in 1967 and 1968 agreed was that humanities courses should be open to students of all levels of ability. Abington High School, Abington, Pennsylvania, whose principal, Dr. Allan Glatthorn, has been a national leader in the establishment of humanities courses, offers such a course to "any ninth or tenth grade student (who) is willing to fight and write about ideas." Richard H. Tyre, coordinator of humanities, describes this new program:

> We start with the premise that Humanities is not English or Social Studies, nor art, nor music, but that it is all those subjects which do not find a ready place in the curriculum or which, if included, would stretch the standard course out of shape: psychology, sociology, anthropology, theology, or morality, economics, etc. The course is designed to be as much unlike a regular school course as possible. Each student meets once a week in a large group in our Little Theater

with the 270 students who have elected Humanities and the teachers who conduct the seminars in it. The large group is for outside speakers, demonstrations, psychedelic light shows, movies, etc. Then each student meets two additional times during the week for seminars of about 11 or 12 students each. One seminar is one module (23 minutes) and the other is 2 modules (46 minutes).

The year is usually divided into eight major topics or ideas of about a month's duration each. Since there are eight teachers participating in the program, each one is responsible for preparing one of the units and four or five large group presentations that go with it. Then all eight teachers use it in their seminars.

Each of the eight units has a book or collected group of readings as its central focus and the students usually have an independent study or "guest" activity or project connected with the unit. In addition, each student in the program keeps an intimate journal for the whole year.

This year we started the unit on Zen Buddhism. The seminar room was dark, cushions were placed on the floor for each student. Incense was burning in the room and the students meditated on koans. The goal of the unit was to give the students a small sense of Zen rather than an intellectual discussion of it which would be a contradiction of what Zen is all about.

Next was a unit on Marshall McLuhan, using a picture book, *The Medium Is the Massage,* as the text. This led to a month-unit on Surfaces, which asks the question, through short stories, poems, and psychological exercises, What is a surface and what is below it?

These were followed by a unit on the four kinds of love, using C. S. Lewis' book of that title as the central document.

Then a unit on murder which had as its theme not only that every man is a potential murderer, e.g., *Lord of the Flies,* but also Oscar Wilde's awareness in "The Ballad of Reading Gaol" that we always kill the one we love.

This led directly into a unit on the beauty of the seemingly ugly, or unexpected beauties using *The Family of Man* as our text. The last two units of the year were sort of a consideration of the race riots, the war issue and related phenomena using Eric Hoffer's *The True Believer* as the center of one unit and Thoreau and other authors on civil dissent as the center of the last unit.

Each unit starts with what might be a cliché or a truism

> and tries to get the student by the end of it to a position where he is confused on certain of his old standards and in a mood to see that there is more complexity and subtlety involved than he had imagined.
>
> Each of the eight teachers is free to conduct the seminars in any way that he sees fit, and the sky is the limit in choosing activities which range from trips to New York to serving meals during the seminar.[7]

Much of the activity in the field of English during recent years has centered in the programs of study being developed at the various curriculum centers funded by the U.S. Office of Education under the original title of Project English. Only one of these, the center at Carnegie-Mellon University, addressed itself to the problem of providing a curriculum for the academically talented college-bound student. This three-year curriculum, now in the public domain, stresses literature and composition, with emphasis on world literature in the tenth grade, American literature in the eleventh grade, and a genre organization with major stress on English literature in the twelfth grade. Other curriculum centers, while not planning their curriculum particularly for students of superior ability, have produced challenging units in rhetoric, language, and literature which should be stimulating to students in an honors program.

Many successful programs for the academically talented have developed from cooperation between secondary schools and colleges. Selected English staff at Carnegie-Mellon, working in cooperation with local high school teachers, produced an Advanced Placement curriculum as well as the Project English curriculum already described. The work of the Wisconsin Curriculum Center is a continuation of a statewide curriculum study organized in 1959 by Dr. Robert Pooley of the University of Wisconsin, which involved hundreds of teachers throughout the state. The Project English Demonstration Center at Euclid, Ohio, which gave teachers a chance to see challenging junior high school English programs in action during the three-year period for which it was funded, was a program developed cooperatively by Euclid Central Junior High School and Western Reserve University.

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[7] Richard H. Tyre, in a letter to the author of this chapter.

An example of school-college interaction, though not an actual working cooperation, is the history of the Upward Bound program. As part of the current awareness of the undeveloped potential of many students from disadvantaged areas, a number of cities and institutions of higher education began simultaneously to experiment with programs of precollege training and orientation for youth with the intellectual potential for college work but with no motivation or financial support for college attendance. Perhaps the best known was the Higher Horizons program developed by a group of high schools in New York City. Most of these programs have now been merged into the Upward Bound project supported by government funds through the U.S. Office of Economic Opportunity. In the summer of 1966 more than twenty thousand high school students attended classes on 216 or more college campuses.

The usual pattern for these programs includes summer sessions for the selected students on a college campus, with courses designed as preparation for college programs; opportunities to attend community cultural events such as plays, concerts, and lectures; Saturday sessions on the college campus throughout the school years; and attempts to secure scholarship help or at least acceptance into college for members of the Upward Bound program.

Certainly it is too early to make a critical evaluation of this program. Richard Frost, its national director, believes, however, that there is tremendous chemistry in "putting latently talented high school students from low income families where college was not in the universe on a college campus for a summer to be taught by an equally fresh mixture of college and high school teachers and undergraduate tutors." [8]

The use of the medium of television has proved a possible method of providing adequate training in some phases of English for able students, particularly in small schools which may lack personnel for such courses. An example of this approach is the Franklin to Frost program in American literature, a series of lectures by Dr. Arthur Eastman of the University of Michigan, originally telecast on the Mideast Program on Airborne Television Instruction but available for use by an educational television station. Another widespread and successful use of mass media to make available to high school students the scholarship of university professors and other experts in the arts is the showing of the Humanities films. Originally begun as a project by the Massachusetts Council for the Humanities and later taken over by the Encyclopaedia Brittanica, the films present such programs as a four-lecture series by Maynard Mack on *Hamlet*, another four-lecture series on *Oedipus* by Bernard Knox, and a series of films on *Macbeth* in which Douglas Campbell interprets the play from a director's point of view. Recent programs present *A Doll's House* and *The Cherry Orchard.* Particularly for small schools with limited facilities and personnel, the use of the media of television and film offers possibilities for the training of academically talented students in English.

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[8] Dranov, Paula. "A Taste of College." *American Education* 3: 25; April 1967.

The trend which is receiving the most attention at present, however, is the rapid expansion of programs in independent study and in ungraded organization for learning. These approaches, though they have much in common, are not synonymous; both have important implications for the academically talented. Perhaps the school best known nationally for its nongraded program is Melbourne High School in Florida. In this system students are grouped on the basis of achievement on nationally standardized tests into five cycles or phases of learning, from Remedial to the Quest Phase. A student may be in the lowest phase in one subject and in the highest phase in another. Elevation from one phase to another may be initiated by the student but must be determined by an academic appraisal involving counselor, student, and teacher. The program follows the Trump Plan, with

10 percent of the time devoted to large-group sessions, lectures primarily; 45 percent to small groups for discussions; and 45 percent to independent study. Phases 4 and 5 are available for the academically talented student, phase 4 being a program in depth for students who achieve above the norm, and phase 5, Quest education. Acoording to Principal B. Frank Brown, the Quest Phase is "designed to foster and expand traits of curiosity and imagination, which will lead to the development of inquiring minds." [9] In this phase much of the student's time is spent in independent study and research; he may spend from one to three hours a day in pursuit of a particular project. The student applying for Quest submits a monograph describing the type of study he wishes to pursue and the benefits he expects to derive from this study. A directing teacher supervises his research and assesses his achievement, but the student must budget his own time in a schedule which he himself develops.

Another well-known nongraded school is Nova High School, the initial unit of the South Florida Educational Center, a complex which will eventually include kindergarten to graduate school. Nova is not experimental in its curriculum, which is a traditional "hard-core" curriculum; its newness of approach lies in its organization, which sets up completely homogeneous grouping, regardless of grades, within each subject area. Scores on tests administered at the end of a unit determine progress to the next achievement level. Students receive both a quality and a quantity grade.

While the nongraded school provides opportunity for independent study, the majority of students still work in groups. Independent study programs, however, which are proliferating rapidly, center the instructional program around the individual. Most experimental programs in this area have been developed in the elementary school, as in the Oakleaf School of the Baldwin-Whitehall School District, in which students use programed materials in reading and arithmetic which are developed by the

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[9] Brown, B. Frank. *The Nongraded High School.* Englewood Cliffs, N.J.: Prentice-Hall, 1963. p. 57.

Learning Research and Development Center of the University of Pittsburgh. In Project Plan, currently being tested in 12 cities in the United States, the programs of individual students in grades 1, 5, and 9 are directed by computers in Palo Alto, California. At the high school level, students in Evanston Township, Evanston, Illinois, are enrolled in a seminar in which study is largely individual. Each student makes a thorough study of a novelist, poet, or playwright and prepares a critique on the writer and his work. The teacher's role is mainly that of a resource person. Another example of a high school English program planned for the individual is the Independent Study Course in Literature, prepared by the Department of Public Instruction of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania and designed for gifted high school students, particularly those in small high schools where special classes are not feasible. This course, which was written by Dr. Edward B. Partridge of Tulane University, sets up 18 units for which the "Manual" suggests readings, provides critical background for the readings, lists study questions and writing assignments, and suggests additional readings.

The last decade has witnessed a growing interest in the genesis of creativity. Many research projects have been initiated to study the characteristics of creative persons and the relative merit of various curriculums in the encouragement of creativity. Though English courses for academically talented students in the past have often been rigidly limited to explications of the text in literature and to expository writing based on reading, the present trend is in the direction of greater emphasis on the creative in the writing of able students. Herbert J. Muller, in his report of the Dartmouth conference, says: "With a caveat or so, the group arrived at an unusually enthusiastic agreement on the importance of creative writing." He continues,

> In American schools the teaching of creative writing usually stops abruptly at about the fifth grade. Then students are given conventional assignments in exposition and drills in mechanics—and they begin to rebel against writing. In the

> many British schools where they continue with creative or personal writing they may profit more from it as they mature. David Holbrook sees its primary value in all that the student learns about himself as he explores the mysteries, wonders, and terrors of the inner world. . . . With such growth in personality, students also grow more sensitive to the world about them, more alert and perceptive. They may better exercise their powers of choice and enjoy more real freedom of choice. They may better resist all the tendencies to mechanization, standardization, and regimentation that deaden sensibility, all the pressures to conformism that stunt or stifle individuality. . . . The seminar agreed that it [an imaginative program of creative writing] was particularly important as a means of combatting the inhuman trends in modern civilization.[10]

One interesting creative approach in curriculum is that of the *Education Through Vision* syllabus developed at Phillips Academy in Andover under the auspices of the Council for Public Schools and the Massachusetts College for Art. Objectives of this program are:

> 1. To increase intellectual awareness and curiosity through vision
> 2. To help clarify abstract concepts by providing sensory analogies
> 3. To provide a vehicle for discovering interdisciplinary relationships which are so much needed to understand the complexities of the modern world.[11]

The philosophical basis of the program is explained as follows:

> The secondary school curriculum is almost entirely verbalized with the exception of the abstract role of symbols in mathematics. Except for a few who are already visually motivated, the discipline of vision is currently omitted from any significant role in the learning process, especially as the student approaches maturity. Yet it is one of man's most natural and vital methods of apprehension and involves refinement of the emotions as well as the intellect.[12]

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[10] Muller, Herbert J. *The Uses of English.* New York: Holt, Rinehart & Winston, 1967. pp. 116, 122.

[11] Council for Public Schools. *Education Through Vision.* Boston: the Council and Massachusetts College of Art, 1967. p. 1.

[12] *Ibid.*, p. 2.

Some of the activities listed as applications of this principle to the discipline of English include the use of visual analogy to develop the concept of metaphor, problems in synesthesia to sharpen students' awareness of the interrelationships among the senses, use of poetry collages to give visual expression to the images of a poem, and visual symbols in communication.

These are some of the many ways in which teachers today are providing for the intellectual needs of academically talented young people. The best programs of the past have survived. A whole new direction has opened up for more efficient training of talented students in the nongraded school and through independent study. Finally, the contemporary study of creativity should add a much-needed element to English programs for the academically talented.

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